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ABSTRACT

The Qualitative Studies section of the proceedings contains the following 14 papers: "'Virtual Anonymity': Online Accountability in Political Bulletin Boards and the Makings of the Virtuous Virtual Journalist" (Jane B. Singer); "The Case of the Mysterious Ritual: 'Murder, She Wrote' and 'Perry Mason'" (Karen E. Riggs); "Political Issues in the Early Black Press: Applying Frame Analysis to Historical Contexts" (Aleen J. Ratzlaff and Sharon Hartin Iorio); "Leaks in the Pool: The Press at the Gulf War Battle of Khafji" (David H. Mould); "Professional Clock-Punchers: Journalists and the Overtime Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act" (Robert Jensen); "Love, Gender and Television News" (Don Heider and Leona Hood); "Tabloids, Lawyers and Competition Made Us Do It!: How Journalists Construct, Interpret and Justify Coverage of the O.J. Simpson Story" (Elizabeth K. Hansen); "The Taming of the Shrew: Women's Magazines and the Regulation of Desire" (Gigi Durham); "Communitarian Journalism(s): Clearing the Conceptual Landscape" (David A. Craig); "What 'Indians' Mean in the Media: Race, Language, and the Popular Imagination" (John M. Coward); "'It's Going to Be a Rough Ride, Buddy!' A Phenomenological Analysis of the Collision between 'Hate Speech' and Free Expression in Students' Experiences of the Khallid Muhammad Controversy" (Brenda Cooper); "Noise and Signal as a Textbook Case: Rhetorics of Mass Communication Inquiry" (Ralph Beliveau); "Implications of Audience Ethics for the Mass Communicator" (James L. Aucoin); and "Telling Lies: The Symbolic Function of Lies in Sitcoms" (Elizabeth Atwood-Gailey). (RS)

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"VIRTUAL ANONYMITY":

Online Accountability in Political Bulletin Boards and the Makings of the Virtuous Virtual Journalist

Presented to:

Qualitative Studies Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
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ABSTRACT

"VIRTUAL ANONYMITY": Online Accountability in Political Bulletin Boards and the Makings of the Virtuous Virtual Journalist

Online communication offers an alternative to traditional methods of political discourse -- and, in the process, raises new ethical concerns about anonymity and accountability. This paper explores the ethical implications of these related issues through a look at the discussion on the political bulletin boards offered by two online services during the 1994 campaign season. It then considers the role of the journalist in this computer-mediated world.

"VIRTUAL ANONYMITY": Online Accountability in Political Bulletin Boards and the Makings of the Virtuous Virtual Journalist

> We may verge on the kind of golden era described in John Milton's paean to unfettered publishing in `Areopagitica,' an era when people are `disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing ... things not before discoursed or written of' (J. Hamilton, 1994, p. 36).
>
> It is chilling to think that one's freedom or survival might hang up on the electronic whim of one's neighbor -- a neighbor who might be a passionate ignoramus, a religious fanatic, or a well-meaning, completely uninformed person. Who could rest secure a single night in such a society? (Didsbury, 1994, p. 27)

It would be difficult, one suspects, to find two Americans who could agree on the impact that new forms of communication are likely to have on the democratic process -- or, indeed, on our democracy itself. It probably would be equally difficult to find two who would disagree with the assertion that the nature of political discourse is changing. Around the world, 400 million people a day tune in to "Larry King Live" (Media Studies Journal, 1994b). The White House receives an average of 26,000 constituent messages daily, the majority of them electronically -- a volume so large that it took months for staffers to figure out how to handle it (Lemert, 1994). The most popular aspects of online commercial services -- now estimated to have more than 6.3 million subscribers nationwide, up 38 percent from a year ago (Quill, 1995) -- have consistently been those that provide a way for people to talk with one another; the number of discussion groups on the Internet, which serve a similar function, is growing so fast that obtaining an accurate count is impossible.

All this technologically enabled discourse is altering the way Americans participate in the affairs of their nation -- and therefore, given the representative nature of government, the way the nation conducts its affairs. This paper will examine the ethical implications raised by the uniquely anonymous nature of online political talk.

Most discussion about the ethics of online communication to date has centered on one of two issues: either access, and related knowledge-gap concerns about society's haves and have-nots; or privacy, with cogent and urgent questions raised about what legal scholar Anne Branscomb calls "personal autonomy over decisions about how information about [people] is used and when and how it is made public" (1994, p. 183). This paper, however, will focus on a different ethical aspect, one the author believes has not been adequately explored:[1] the issues raised by the "virtual anonymity" of political discussion that falls somewhere between face-to-face and mass communication. The first part of the paper explores the nature of the political messages exchanged online; the second part considers the multiple roles of the ethical online journalist as an information gatherer and disseminator as well as a community member in this computer-mediated world.

If we accept the philosophical notion that a proper action is one that can withstand the glare of publicity (Bok, 1984), what ethical sense can we make of communication that is conducted by individuals sitting in isolation before a computer monitor, yet consists primarily of seeking -- and finding -- connections with others sitting elsewhere in similar isolation? And if ethical questions are indeed raised by this computer-screened anonymity, can journalists and their ethical norms provide any answers?

THE STUDY

This paper is based on the results of research conducted during the 1994 campaign season; information about the methodology used is provided in the endnotes. Messages concerning the elections in three states -- including particularly heated races in California and Virginia -- were sampled from among those posted by users of the political bulletin boards on the Prodigy service and America Online (AoL).[2] In addition, a separate census was taken of Prodigy messages from three political candidates who made "guest appearances" to answer subscribers' questions online during the study period.

The most interesting findings concerning online anonymity relate to how individuals used the boards -- specifically, the nature of their online conversation, and the varying degrees of personal identity and involvement they displayed. (The following discussion concerns messages posted by subscribers to the two services; candidate messages are discussed separately under "Virtual Anonymity.")

Exactly half the messages were identified by the researcher as expressions of opinion: people stating their views about any of 42 different candidates, 77 different issues or whatever else happened to be on their minds. (Few of those issues were in line with traditional media campaign coverage, which scholars such as Jamieson (1992) categorize as focusing excessively on strategic concerns such as who is winning at any particular moment and what various candidates are doing about it). This message, posted on AoL on Nov. 5, is an example of an "opinion":[3]

> If North lied to Congress, so what? Congress is made up of liars. Congress calling Ollie North a liar is the pot calling the kettle black.

Coming in a distant second were personal attacks -- "flames," in computer jargon -- which accounted for about 14 percent of the messages; an example is this one, posted on Prodigy on Oct. 30:

> [Name deleted], you sound like a repressed homosexual yourself. Your facade of christian family values that are corrupting this country and destroying our constitution are keeping you from expressing your true self.

The rest of the messages were strung across six categories: information (about 11 percent), queries (10 percent), description (4 percent), personal defense (4 percent), support for another user (3.5 percent), and persuasion, defined here as exhortation to action (3 percent). Two messages (an offer to post poll results and a good-luck note) were counted as "other."

Of particular note is the relative paucity of messages that either provided or sought information compared with those that served to express a personal or political opinion. The sample included a number of conversational threads that used information provided by the mass media as jumping-off points for the expression of a personal opinion about the election, lending support to the proposition that different communication vehicles serve a complementary rather than a replacement function (see, for example, Lenart, 1994, and Chaffee, 1972). (Or, in the less ponderous words of talk show demigod Larry King: "Talk shows should supplement the campaign press, not replace it. There's room enough for everyone" (Media Studies Journal, 1994b, p. 125).) From an ethical standpoint, questions of accountability for both information and opinions arise; these will be discussed below.

These findings are in line with those obtained a few years ago by Ogan, although she took a more longitudinal approach to see how the nature of messages changed over time. Ogan focused on discussion of the Persian Gulf War on an electronic mail listserv. In the first week of her study, a great deal of information was exchanged online about the war -- including requests for confirmation of media reports that were presumed to be biased. As time passed, however, more and more opinion became mixed with the news; as early as the second week of the study, political opinions -- most of them concerning specific statements of other participants in the conversation -- constituted the largest portion of the online discourse. Expressions of opinion about the war and related matters continued to dominate the discussion until it eventually petered out and the listserv members moved on to other topics (Ogan, 1993). Similarly, Garramone and her team proposed in the mid-1980s that the interactive capability of online bulletin boards allows users to fulfill a need to express their feelings and beliefs; the exchange of opinions, rather than mere surveillance of the opinions of others, may be particularly useful in identifying one's own social location (Garramone et al., 1986b).

The Prodigy bulletin boards offered a unique opportunity to trace individual conversation strings. On AoL, posted messages are simply listed chronologically within the appropriate topic of discussion; on Prodigy, people have the option of either initiating a conversation or responding to a comment made by another member. Those responses, or "replies," are then "attached" by the system to the original note, and can be read only by first calling up that note.

At least two interesting findings emerged from a look at these reply strings. First, people did not appear to seek out online conversational partners with whom they agreed. On the contrary, the most prolonged and heated discussion was among individuals who vehemently disagreed; a single note about California's Proposition 187, which would cut certain services to illegal immigrants, generated more than 150 replies in the pre-election sample period alone, with both supporters and opponents well-represented in the discussion.[4]

Such a finding would seem to contradict the Spiral of Silence hypothesis of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who suggested that people fear isolation from the majority and therefore constantly scan their information environment to try to determine the dominant opinion, adjusting their own public expressions to conform with what they perceive to be the majority viewpoint (see, for example, Gonzenbach, 1992).[5] It might, however, support an idea put forth by Lenart, that an individual's opinions of national and local issues may be shaped by different forces. Lenart (1994) suggests that sensitivity to changes in what he calls the "national opinion climate" may operate along Spiral of Silence lines. But the "local opinion climate" -- prevalent during this mid-term election -- may encourage people to find confederates within a community who can legitimize and support even minority opinions. It is possible, then, that online boards serve both an interpersonal function of uniting like-minded people in conversation and a media function of providing a channel for communication among dissimilar individuals (see Chaffee, 1972).

A second interesting aspect of these online political discussions is that the purpose of the original note often differed dramatically from the purpose behind the replies to it, especially as the conversation lengthened. Just two examples:

* Of the 85 Prodigy messages categorized as personal attacks, a grand total of one was an original note. The rest were all replies.

* Although the overall number of messages that either sought or provided information was relatively small, such messages made up 37 percent of the original Prodigy notes, compared with 16.5 percent of

the replies. Almost 68 percent of a total of 420 replies were either expressions of opinion or personal attacks.

In addition to the purpose of the online messages as a whole, another interesting finding concerned their tone. About 61 percent of all the messages were judged by the researcher to be very or somewhat hostile in tone; only 14 percent were very or somewhat friendly. Again, there were differences between original notes and replies on Prodigy; the latter were significantly more hostile. For example, here's a original note, a short, neutral request for information [ellipses in original], posted in late September:

> I'm trying (still) to get full text of Prop 187...hope to hear from someone soon.

And here's reply 73 of 81, posted several weeks later. The reply was not to the person who wrote the original note; rather, the conversation had veered off by then in new directions and been joined by a host of different participants. This particular reply was part of a lengthy exchange between two men about the controversial measure:

> You know nothing more than name-calling and immature labeling. I can only think that this is because you really know nothing about this issue, or politics in general. Grow up and quit using Limbaugh as your icon. Try opening a newspaper.

Additional differences also appeared between the two services; those will be discussed below because of their relevance to the issue of anonymity. Examples of online hostility, of course, have become almost legendary in the annals of the Internet, where complex systems of conversational "netiquette" have evolved but have done little to halt the development of flaming as something of an online art form.

What seems to emerge most strongly from this data is that people are not choosing to participate in an online discussion of politics because of a need for information. Indeed, they are likely to be overwhelmed with information as it is; marketing studies consistently have shown that users of services such as Prodigy and AoL are heavy consumers of traditional media, and they obviously have the computer and the modem to allow them access to an enormous range of online information, as well. Rather, they seem to be going online to fulfill two complementary needs, one individual and one social:

* They are seeking to define themselves and to develop a form of personal empowerment in a decision-making process that has become increasingly distant and meaningless. A sense of unreality pervades politics; we have reached a point, one historian says, where people believe neither the politicians, who cannot be trusted because they want to be elected, nor the media, who cannot be believed because they want to sell newspapers or boost ratings (Cmiel, 1991). In Jamieson's view, traditional media coverage, with its emphasis on strategy over substance, encourages candidates to duck matters of real public concern and encourages voters to see themselves as mere spectators evaluating the performances of those bent on cynical manipulation (Jamieson, 1992). In a sense, participation in an online discussion allows voters to reclaim a more fulfilling role in their democracy.

* They are seeking to connect to others. They are, to borrow an idea advanced by media ethicist Elliot King, assembling online. "In contemporary, technocratic politics, assembly is seen only as a stage for a two-minute television visual (if that)," King suggests. "The online world is a new, safe place to interact in politics in a way that has otherwise gone away" (King, 1994). Rheingold, in The Virtual Community (Addison-Wesley, 1993), describes such a community as a group of people who enjoy spending time together in cyberspace; what people really want out of a system such as the Internet, he says, is

an opportunity to form meaningful relationships with people they may never meet face to face. Christians and his co-authors, in their exploration of communitarian ethics in the media, emphasize that the central feature of human being is community; we cannot exist as individuals except in relation to others (Christians et al., 1993). Developmental psychologists have focused on the idea of connection in terms of moral development, from Piaget's suggestion that children in the higher stages of such development begin to recognize the commonality and universality of rules, to Gilligan's emphasis on connectedness as a key to moral reasoning, particularly among women.

Even more to the point of this study is the related notion of publicity, offered by such philosophers as John Rawls and Sissela Bok: To be moral, a principle must be capable of public statement and defense (see Bok, 1989). In one way, participants in the discourse studied here acted ethically by this definition. Their messages were posted on public boards, with some identification identifying them as the source. Yet in another way, they remained "virtually anonymous." Garramone and her colleagues express the idea this way, though they do not use the term: Regardless of whether real names are provided (and the two services differed in this regard, as discussed below), board participants still might pass their online conversation partner in the street without recognition (Garramone et al., 1986a). In other words, while people can and do establish clear identities online, they also leave themselves an escape hatch. They are known ... but not really. They are accountable for what they say ... but only so long as they choose to remain "visible" to the online community. That odd dual nature of online political discourse poses a number of ethical issues.

"VIRTUAL ANONYMITY"

We need to begin by defining the different degrees of anonymity represented by participation in the bulletin boards studied here. First, it may be worth emphasizing that this study concerned public boards, not private electronic mail, which both services also offer. All the messages included in the study were intended for public consumption. It also is worth reiterating that these are commercial services; people are billed for the privilege of using them. This business matter has ethical implications: While other subscribers may not know participants' identities, SOMEONE online does. That someone is represented by the company that sends out the monthly bills. Both Prodigy and AoL have service agreements; subscribers who violate the terms of those agreements -- such as by posting messages deemed overly abusive -- can be kicked off.[6] True, there is little to prevent them from getting back on again. But the fact that they can be individually identified by board operators does limit their anonymity and provide some element of accountability for public postings.

How identifiable they are to other participants in the online discussion, however, is a different matter -- and varies between the two services. On Prodigy, the name of the sender of all notes and replies posted on the boards is automatically displayed. That name is the same name used to enroll in the service. While it is possible to enroll under a phony name ("Oliver North," for instance), there is no reason to suspect the practice is widely followed. A person enrolling on AoL, in contrast, must select a name by which he or she will be known in all correspondence through the service. Some people use their real names; most choose aliases, partly because of the limited number of characters available but also, it seems, because of the ability to pick a name that expresses something about oneself. Among the many aliases in use on AoL's political boards during the 1994 campaign season were "Beltwybndt," "Demobabe," "PopScience" and "SoarWEagle."

Prodigy members who post board messages, then, are more likely to be recognizable by other members in the "offline" world -- by their friends, co-workers and whoever else knows them by name. On AoL, their next-door neighbor might not realize that they are, say, the person posting messages as "SoarWEagle." This extra element of anonymity night be expected to lead to letting down any remaining barriers to self-expression. In the words of one Internet user: There is something "incredibly liberating" about being who you're not. "On the net, you've got anonymity. You are who you type" (LaRue, 1994, p. 73).

So were messages on AoL more free-wheeling than those on Prodigy? Not at all -- in fact, the opposite was the case. On the Prodigy boards, more than 64 percent of the messages were hostile in tone, compared with about 48.5 percent on AoL. Almost a third of the Prodigy messages fell into the "very hostile" category; just 16 percent of the AoL ones did. And while the largest proportion of messages were placed in the "opinion" category on both services, the second-highest purpose of AoL was "information." On Prodigy, it was "personal attacks."[7]

It would appear that the conversational structure afforded by the two services may be more important in determining the purpose and tone of messages than the degree of anonymity they offer. Prodigy board users can "speak" directly to one another, discussing a specific subject in an ongoing back-and-forth conversation. AoL, which posts all messages chronologically, does not allow replies to be attached to a particular note, so the conversation is more disjointed. Put another way, the structure of the Prodigy service does a better job at meeting the two complementary needs identified above: for individuation, in that there is a greater degree of personal identification with posted messages, and for connection, in that the ability to develop conversational strings allows a discussion that has more of the characteristics of face-to-face interpersonal communication.

A number of other interesting ethical issues related to anonymity and accountability were encountered in this study:

1) As mentioned, three candidates in the races studied here "appeared" on Prodigy boards during October ... or did they? Fourteen replies to selected member queries were posted under the name and Prodigy ID of "Kathleen Brown," another eight by "Oliver North" and six by "Charles Robb." The messages themselves were hardly startling. They contained reiterations of positions doubtless expressed thousands of times during the campaign; in fact, both Brown and North cited a printed brochure available to interested voters seeking more details. For example, here is part of a message posted under Brown's name:

> ... People do not feel their elected officials are in touch with the public. Let me assure you that I will work vigorously to change the way we do things. In my written economic plan, "Building a New California," I talk about how I would cut and streamline government ...

Of more interest here is the true source of the message. Seeing a note posted under a candidate's name is not the same thing as seeing the candidate make a statement on television -- or even reading about it in print, where the ethics and norms of mainstream journalism offer the public some assurance that quotes are not concocted out of whole cloth. (See the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics.) Online, the candidate is virtually anonymous. The message may have come straight from the horse's keyboard -- or it may have come from a staffer, with or without the candidate ever having seen it.

This, then, is a type of "public" communication without true public accountability. It is much closer to what Bok calls "public relations": presenting the best possible image of a person, event or organization. Publicity of this kind, she warns, can involve secrecy, manipulation and deception; the orchestration of appearances can hide problems and make a mockery of publicity in the sense of public discussion and accountability (Bok, 1984). Interestingly, while the candidates ostensibly "replied" to Prodigy members online, they did not participate in a true verbal exchange. Subscribers could not reply to the reply, as they do with messages posted by other members.

2) Also of interest is the way board users can lessen their anonymity by divulging information about themselves (information, of course, that may or may not be accurate).[8] But information may be provided by other cues, such as participants' use of language ... or, in an environment in which aliases are less common, their names. The Prodigy discussion of Prop 187 offered a fascinating example. Among the most vocal participants was a man with a Hispanic name, who posted repeated messages in an (apparently futile) attempt to convince other users of the undesirability of the measure for individuals who would be most affected by it. Here is an excerpt from one of his messages:

> Why do I worry? * I will be a suspect like millions of other citizens. I used to live in the Imperial County that borders Mexico. Every time I crossed the border back to the US, a simple "American citizen" was not enough to let me through. ... I thought that NOW that I live away from the border I was going to enjoy freedom. That is going to be taken away from me. I will be detained. ... I guess it would be easy to have an "implant" or a tattoo. Maybe "we" should wear a red, white and blue "star of David" ...

Through his intense efforts to personalize the issue, he not only went through a process of self-definition and individuation; he also came to represent -- in effect, to be accountable for -- the Hispanic community as a whole, at least to other participants in the online discussion. Yet, of course, he was not accountable in the way an elected representative, or even a spokesman appointed by a group, would be; the ethical implications of such a role, designated by oneself in conjunction with the (often prejudiced and stereotypical) views of the online community, certainly merit further inquiry.[9]

3) At least one of the issues related to anonymity online has a correlation with mass media use. Although we know something about who is participating in the online conversation (even if it is only the frequency with which the same people appear),[10] we do not know who is reading the posted messages -- just as we generally do not know the individuals who are watching the "CBS Evening News" or dropping money in the vending box to buy a Washington Post. Unlike face-to-face group encounters, where both active and passive members are visible to all, electronic groups may perceive that their members include only the active participants; those who do not post messages do not make their presence felt. For these passive participants, Ogan (1993) suggests, the boards resemble a traditional medium -- one for their consumption only. In other words, the "lurkers'" anonymity is all but total, much as it is with some forms of more traditional media use.

4) Hackers are a fact of online life. Mostly, they're an accepted nuisance (and some grow up to be creative entrepreneurs who provide wonderful computer products). But they can be quite harmful, largely because of the anonymity that shields them. Consider the virulently racist posting to the international Usenet board sent out under a Michigan student's name last year. That posting made its way through the electronic world without any hint that it was the work of an anonymous hacker; the student, repulsed by its content, was able to

respond to only a fraction of the thousands of irate messages he got (Levander, 1994). A hacker could also pose as Bill Clinton -- or you or I or New York Times political guru R.W. Apple. Ethics watchdogs such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation do exist in cyberspace, but their effect is limited and almost always after-the-fact. The damage that is possible by appropriation of someone else's name is enormous.

NOW, THE GOOD NEWS ...

But before we go too far down the road of denouncing the ethical ambiguity of virtual anonymity, it is worth noting that such anonymity also affords some protection against bias and stereotyping. The computer, in a way, forms a sort of "veil of ignorance," to borrow Rawls' expression: Sitting at our keyboards, we are equal in ways we may not be in "real" life. We are judged by what we say, not who we are. For instance, Ogan points out that status considerations that come from seeing an individual, or from placing him or her in a particular social milieu, need not intervene in the online conversation. "It did not seem to matter whether ideas were offered by full-time faculty members or undergraduate students on the network," she says of the conversation about the Gulf War on the listserv she studied. "Unless a participant informed other members of his or her occupational status, such information was not generally made available" (Ogan, 1993, p. 187). Or, in the words of one high school "Star Trek" fan who believes life online has some of the same utopian qualities that are so appealing on the Starship Enterprise: "The only thing that matters is how a person thinks" (McCartney, 1994, p. B10).

That is, indeed, a somewhat utopian view, as witness the "flames" hurled at the man with the Hispanic name described above. But the point is well-taken: It may be that in the online world, there are times when the publicity of "full disclosure," beneficial though it generally is, can be detrimental. Yes, anonymity raises ethical problems of identification and accountability to others in the online community. But it also can enable individuals to join in conversations from which they might otherwise be excluded. "Not having to deal with physical appearances makes you maybe communicate with people that, if you saw them in person, you'd say, 'That's not my type,'" a 57-year-old says of her experience on SeniorNet, a discussion group for the elderly whose participants range in age at least into their 80s (Rigdon, 1994, p. B5). Once again, we return to the two ideals of empowerment and community, which are particularly relevant when the topic of discussion is politics: If we have broadened the conversation to include even one person whose voice was silent before, we surely have enhanced our democracy by at least that small percent.

These ideas of anonymity and accountability merit close attention as they relate to the ethics of online discussion and to the twin needs of individuation and connection that these conversations appear to serve -- and that online media, with their unique ability to link the individual to Rheingold's "virtual community," seem particularly well-suited to meet. It is a theme that is drawing a growing amount of attention in the field of media ethics, led in large part by the work of communitarians such as Christians, but expressed by others as well. "Morally speaking, the issues in cyberspace are no different than those governing other aspects of life," one commentator has said. The issue is what happens to human consciousness "in a world where reality is virtual, not tangible, where standard measures of honesty are absent and where a user's full identity may never be fully disclosed.

... The dilemma of how to trust or whom to trust in this electronic universe points to a basic human truth: Morality has no meaning without a community whose members are able to articulate their values and willing to live by them" (Connell, 1994, pp. 153, 154, 156).

Such ideas not only mirror the communitarian views about human commonalities. They also provide an opportunity to begin to apply an ethical framework to the online political discussion studied here. If we see anonymity as a key problem online, we might best be able to address it through Bok's notions of publicity. She outlines three levels at arriving at moral justification for an act (Bok, 1984):

* A check of one's own conscience comes first. Can we live comfortably with ourselves if we carry out the action?

* Consciences vary in their rigor. The next requirement is to consult peers, colleagues and experts for precedents and advice. How does the action under consideration stack up?

* Finally, the public must be consulted, at least figuratively. An ethical action is one that could pass the scrutiny of all members of society who would have a significant stake in the decision made. Consensus may be impossible, but an ethical act should at least be able to withstand such scrutiny and still emerge as defensible.

It may not be possible -- nor even desirable -- to change the nature of the "virtual anonymity" afforded the participants in online political discussion. There is a certain freedom in such anonymity that may encourage the expression of the divergent views our Constitution was designed to protect. Yet participants in the discussion who make an effort to adhere to Bok's principles perform a dual service. First, they empower themselves and enhance their self-definition by opting to contribute honestly to the conversation. And second, they enhance the community of which they are members by considering the impact of their statements on all who are part of it, visible or not. Abuses of any system are always possible. Always available, as well, is the option to choose not to be abusive.

THE VIRTUOUS VIRTUAL JOURNALIST

With Bok's ideas in mind, we can turn to a journalist's multiple roles in this online political discussion and raise issues related to the nature of his or her own "virtual anonymity." We are, after all, talking here specifically about a political conversation. The First Amendment was drafted to protect an open discussion of topics exactly like the ones explored by these bulletin board participants. Some see online communication as fulfilling this vision: "The whole idea of the First Amendment was to empower people to use the news, not to make them dependent on government or a few journalists," one commentator has written. "New communications technologies have the potential of letting the public come closer than ever to realizing the full value of the First Amendment" (J. Hamilton, 1994, pp. 46-47). Others see more threat than promise, citing such potential problems as over-reliance on "fads and fashions" in ideas: "In the realm of style," says one who remains unconvinced of the joys of online democracy, "no harm results from this; in matters of statecraft, law and society, the results could be chaotic if not calamitous" (Didsbury, 1994, p. 23).

Enter the journalist, who is turning up more and more often on computer screens. Estimates of the number of interactive publications vary wildly; by one of the more conservative counts, as many as 300 publications now have, or plan, an online presence (Wolff, 1994), and the Internet offers evidence that the numbers are growing steadily.

How is the online journalist different from other participants in the electronic political conversation, and what traits would allow us to recognize a virtuous virtual journalist?

The journalist differs from others online precisely because he or she is accountable in ways that they are not. Bok's elements of publicity carry, perhaps, even more of an element of obligation for the journalist than for others in the interactive world. The virtuous journalist, online or off, harbors a healthy suspicion of anonymity, particularly in political discourse, where secrecy and political power are among the most dangerous of combinations (see Bok, 1989).

For the journalist, "virtual anonymity" has two equally troublesome sides: information coming in and information going out. In terms of input, journalists rely largely on their sources to connect them with worlds of which they may have little or no direct knowledge. Traditionally, such sources have been of a particular type: "officials" whose presumed value and worth as sources of information stem from their position in some legitimated institution. (See, for example, the work of sociologists such as Gans and Tuchman on journalists' construction of news.) Recently, such dubious standard operating procedure has come in for considerable criticism, from both within the profession and outside it. Forays into "civic journalism" have emphasized the need to involve "real people" in the news, as sources both of inspiration for what to cover and of information to be included in that coverage. Christians and his communitarian colleagues go even further, citing the need for the press to take on the role of civic transformation, helping a community change for the better.

Political bulletin boards such as those considered here might seem to open up a whole new world of potential sources, real people whose conversations weave a fascinating net of intermeshed opinion, information (as well as misinformation and disinformation) and inquiry. Here is an unprecedented opportunity to tap into the political discourse taking place among the citizens of a democracy -- in a sense, the true "governors" of our nation, suddenly given public voice, at least to talk with one another.

But while their voice IS public, it is, in a real sense, still anonymous. Within the very loose bounds established by providers of commercial online services such as those studied here, an individual can say anything at all. He or she then has the option of remaining a participant in the discussion or abandoning it; participation is entirely voluntary, and no one is under any obligation to join the conversation. Nor does the individual have an obligation to correct an inaccurate statement, to apologize for a racist remark, to support a preposterous claim. Indeed, the online political discussion may be attractive for precisely this reason: "I find it a very free medium, in which I can express my opinions or views unsupported by facts," one Internet user commented recently (D. Hamilton, 1994, p. B5). Another way of looking at this virtual anonymity is to think of it as allowing the average bulletin board user to make only a partial commitment to the community of which he or she is a member: Vanishing, permanently or temporarily, is an option at any time. Online conversations may be -- indeed, should be -- a wellspring of ideas for the journalist. But their anonymity cloaks them in unreliability. As sources, board participants fail to meet standards demanded by ethical journalism.

Such online information coming in to the journalist, then, is anonymous and its purveyors may be accountable to no one. But the journalist, of course, does not just collect information. He or she also disseminates it. Online or off, "anonymous journalism" is an oxymoron. The journalist who appears online in his or her professional role is not an anonymous participant in any discussion. Journalists are in the business of providing an ongoing service, and ethical journalism involves taking responsibility for what appears as part of that service. When an error is made, for example, the ethical journalist seeks to correct it; whether the error was transmitted by modem or printing press is irrelevant. (In the words of the SPJ Code of Ethics: "It is the duty of news media to make prompt and complete correction of their errors.") In other words, the journalist is someone who can be counted on to come back tomorrow and do it right. Amateurs don't answer to editors (J. Hamilton, 44); nor do they answer to the public. Journalists do both.

In order to answer responsibly, they must first listen carefully to the voices around them. Journalists, then, must be aware of a third role, in addition to collecting and disseminating information: a role as members of their community, online or off. Conversation, wherever it takes place, is a two-way process, requiring a "listener" as well as a talker. That doesn't necessarily mean changing what one chooses to say, a subject that has caused misgivings about civic journalism. It does mean hearing what others are saying. The average traditional journalist listens to editors, to colleagues and to those famous official sources, but far less to the audience, which generally remains anonymous -- faceless and voiceless. Yet listening to the community is a press function increasingly cited as mandatory by media ethicists and lauded by practitioners, particularly as it has been carried out in relation to the political and civic decision-making process in such communities as Columbus, Ga., and Wichita, Kan. (See, for instance, Ashe, 1992). Bulletin boards expand that community -- and the opportunities to listen to its concerns.

Even The New York Times, now available on AoL, acknowledges that it's nice to hear from readers: "These message boards are valuable," says executive Andrew Rosenthal, "because when entering the electronic world, you make a commitment not just to present your product, but to establish a two-way street of communication" (Wolff, 1994, p. 64). Indeed, this direct accountability to the audience is seen as vital to the success of online journalistic ventures. "Without a system of public feedback and commentary, it is unlikely that there will be any sense of real credibility for the new media," says Freedom Forum Executive Director Everette E. Dennis (Dennis, 1994, p. 150).

So much for the online journalist as journalist. At least one more question remains, however: When is the journalist an individual and when is he or she a representative of a company or, indeed, an entire industry? When Time magazine took the heat on AoL last summer for retouching its cover photo of O.J. Simpson, some Time staffers joined the conversation -- and sided with those who objected. Managing Editor Jim Gaines (who himself had gone online to take responsibility for the magazine's action and to apologize for it) admits he was taken aback at first and even told them to stop; however, he adds, he eventually "realized they shouldn't be constrained from stating their opinion, that the First Amendment rests on it" (Wolff, 1994, p. 63).

It is important to note, however, that the journalists identified themselves in their postings, thereby voluntarily giving up the protection their "virtual anonymity" might otherwise afford. It also is important to note the reaction among AoL users. Although the angry tones continued after Gaines' posting, some users said they were impressed by Time employees' honesty. And at least one person got to the heart of the ideas of both empowerment and civic transformation with this comment: "This forum enables ordinary Americans to give some input to the writers and editors of the nation's most influential publications. Perhaps we, too, can help shape public opinion" (ibid.).

CONCLUSION

Our current system of political communication has serious flaws. From the country's beginnings, some of the most base political attacks have appeared in unsigned print, and anonymous charges remain a problem. But there are many others. News, especially on television but also in the print media, discourages citizens from thinking about political affairs in terms of complex problems requiring solution; rather, it focuses on assertions, episodes and a sort of cynical score keeping (see Jamieson, 1992, among others). "More and more," one scholar has noted, "reporters seem to be merging their treatment of politics with the sports page: Is Clinton in third place or first place? ... It's a false treatment of leadership and the subtlety of policy formulation. It's an extension of the campaign psychology into the period of governance, and that has become a very serious problem" (Media Studies Journal, 1994a, p. 32). The negative view of the journalist's job has become so pervasive that the former president of NBC News, no less, describes the press as comparable to ants: "They swarm and cannot be eradicated no matter how hard you try. They're ugly and annoying, but they're not terribly important" (ibid., p. 34).

There are those who point to the emergence of new forms of political communication, online bulletin boards among them, as the answer. Indeed, it is hard to argue with the view that the public at least has an opportunity today to be more broadly informed than at any time in the past, and therefore to have an increased ability to form opinions and act on them. But, as this paper has attempted to point out, online communication is not without problems, nor does it relieve journalists of their ethical accountability to themselves or their audience. Yes, they will need to give up some control, to recognize that they no longer have a monopoly as a conduit for political communication. (In reality, they have not had any such monopoly for at least 50 years, since FDR's straight-to-the-public fireside chats. Presidential debates, televised since 1960, are consistently accorded high value by survey respondents, who see them as an optimum and unmediated way of seeing and hearing the candidates. (Lemert, 1994))

Giving up control, however, is a far cry from abrogating responsibility. Indeed, the journalist's responsibility only increases as he or she enters the online world. It is a responsibility that comes with being accountable in an anonymous realm, with taking public responsibility for acts that enhance the conversation with context and meaning. There is an enormous and enormously important job to be done here -- in the full glare of "publicity" in the ethical as well as the journalistic sense of the word.

POSTSCRIPT

One final note, related not to the topic of this paper but to its methodology -- specifically, to the issue of the researcher's own virtual anonymity. The people whose messages were examined here did not give their permission for such research to be conducted. Indeed, they had no knowledge that their postings would be used in any way other than the one they intended: as contributions to an electronic discussion about politics. As online research becomes more prevalent, it will become necessary to address the issues of ethics and human dignity raised by work such as this.

Most universities and other reputable research organizations specify standards for anyone conducting studies that involve human beings. But, as Jones (1994) points out, such guidelines are often oblivious to the idea of conducting research online. It is, again, an issue of publicity: Is cyberspace a "public" place or one in which a participant might reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place? Should we adhere to guidelines such as those Bok suggests for the conduct of research -- a full consideration of alternatives, of harms and benefits, of opportunities for debriefing and so on (see Bok, 1989)? Or are we taking a recipe for making apple pie and trying to apply it to a basket of oranges if we try to plop the social science guidelines into the context of online research?

Jones suggests online communities are forms of social life quite different from those with which we are more familiar. They are more ephemeral. They lack territorial boundaries, demand little individual commitment or identification, are generally open to all comers -- and make it possible to link data sources in a way that reveals far more about a subject than what he or she might consent to divulge. In other words, privacy may not mean the same thing in the context of an online bulletin board as it does "offline." As members of online communities ourselves, we continue to make up the rules as we go along.

Jones offers no definitive answers to the question, and neither does the author of this paper. But it is necessary to raise and begin to consider the issue so that online research, like online journalism, can be brought in line with the dictates of public accountability.

ENDNOTES

1) The field that has generated the most contemporary research into the ethics of anonymity appears to be business and management studies. Examples include Elliston's exploration of whistleblowing in the early 1980s, in which he distinguished anonymity from the related concepts of secrecy and privacy; and more recent research into the effects of anonymity on small groups. In the latter vein, for instance, Valacich and his colleagues suggest that a computer-mediated environment creates various levels and types of anonymity depending on the size of the group (the larger it is, the more anonymity is afforded), its composition and the proximity of its members. Members of anonymous, larger groups tended to generate more unique ideas and to make more critical remarks; however, members of smaller groups, whose members were identified to one another, believed they were more effective and were more satisfied with the results of their online discussion (Valacich et al., 1992).

Businesses seem quite interested in this type of research. IBM, for one, is a big booster of electronic meetings, at which as many as 50 people belly up to personal computers and type anonymous comments that appear on a big screen at the front of their conference room. The results? Subordinates become peers -- and people in general become brutally honest. The anonymity of talking through the computer "turns even shy people powerful," according to the president of a health care company that has used electronic meetings to hammer out a five-year plan. Among the drawbacks: It's impossible to get credit for a good idea (Bartino, 1992, p. 78).

2) Prodigy and America Online are commercial computer-based services aimed at a mass audience, with about 3 million users between them at the time of the study in the fall of 1994. They are among the three largest such services in the United States; the other is CompuServe.

In California, both the Senate and gubernatorial races were heated; the ballot also contained a controversial measure (Proposition 187) that proposed eliminating certain government services for illegal immigrants. In Virginia, ex-Marine Oliver North, a chief figure in the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, sought to oust incumbent Democratic Sen. Charles Robb, an admitted womanizer who is the son-in-law of the late Lyndon Johnson. In addition, Missouri races were chosen as a sort of informal control group; the Senate contest and two ballot measures, related to gambling and allocation of state funds, drew considerable interest within the state but almost none around the nation (and almost none in these online discussions, as it turned out).

A total of 669 messages -- drawn from a day during each of the five weeks preceding the election and from Nov. 9, the day after Election Day -- were content analyzed for a variety of attributes, ranging from their length to more subjective qualities such as purpose and tone. Messages were sampled from one day during each of the five weeks immediately preceding the Nov. 8 election, beginning with the week of Oct. 4. A week was counted as Tuesday through the following Monday because Election Day is a Tuesday. The sampled days, which were selected using a non-replacement sampling technique designed to guard against artifacts caused by weekend or weekday usage patterns, were:

* Tuesday, Oct. 4, 1994.
* Monday, Oct. 17.
* Wednesday, Oct. 19.
* Saturday, Oct. 29.
* Friday, Nov. 4

ENDNOTES, continued

A total of 512 messages (96 from AoL and 416 from Prodigy, which generated lengthy conversation strings because of the format of its bulletin boards) were included in sample for this pre-election period. A systematic sampling procedure was used to select the actual messages that comprised the sample.

A total of 157 messages (32 from AoL and 125 from Prodigy) from Nov. 9, the day after the election, also were included in the study.

The messages were subsequently coded across a variety of dimensions, including purpose and tone, as described in the paper.

In addition, a census was taken of all messages posted on the Prodigy service by three candidates: 14 notes from Kathleen Brown, eight from Oliver North and six from Charles Robb.

Additional details concerning the sampling procedure, the coding process and the overall methodology of this study are available from the author.

3) Punctuation errors or omissions have been fixed for purposes of this paper, to make messages easier to read. Spelling, style and grammatical errors have not been corrected.

4) Not all those replies are included among the 669 coded messages because of the way the Prodigy bulletin boards work. In order to draw a sample from a particular day, it is necessary to designate a "start time"; the system then retrieves all messages -- including replies to previously posted notes -- posted AFTER that start time. The system will not display replies posted prior to the designated time. Therefore, the sample includes a number of conversations (such as the one referred to here) that the researcher picked up in the middle.

5) Of course, it is possible -- even likely -- that users of online bulletin boards are atypical in various ways and conclusions relevant to the general population should not be drawn here. But these findings do suggest fruitful research possibilities may exist for a systematic attempt to test Noelle-Neumann's hypothesis in relation to new forms and uses of computer-mediated communication.

6) Here is a portion of the Aol "Terms of Service Agreement" relating to appropriate use of its communication functions:

> The AoL service is a community-oriented service composed of many different communities of people. Our goal is to provide an interesting, stimulating and fun place for all members. Using vulgar, abusive or hateful language undermines this goal and is not allowed. ... If you use vulgar or abusive language online, even if masked by symbols or other characters, you may either receive an "on-screen warning" by a guide or room host, or in extreme cases may be terminated immediately.

The Prodigy service agreement contains similar provisions.

ENDNOTES, continued

7) As mentioned, messages were coded across a variety of criteria, including purpose (opinion, information, etc.) and tone, or the degree of hostility they expressed. Again, details about the coding process are available from the author.

Below are examples of bulletins that were placed in each of the five coding categories on the scale ranging from "very hostile" to "very friendly." Names have been deleted; ellipses indicate a small amount of additional content was deleted, though the messages cited here were all relatively short. (Overall, messages ranged in length from a few words to six full computer screens of text.)

Very hostile:	"By looking at the depth of your B.S. you have not failed to aviod and drafts, BUD!" [typos in original] (Prodigy, Oct. 18)
Somewhat hostile:	"... That [reference to previous message] was pretty funny, a very good Archie Bunker imitation. ... Reality check. Neither you nor I nor any of us are going anywhere. We have to learn to live with our disagreements. By the way, illegals will not disappear because you don't like them either." (Prodigy, Oct. 29)
Neutral:	"Dare we hope that Ollie might bite a bullet in disgrace? Got my fingers crossed." (AoL, Nov. 9)
Somewhat friendly:	"It's the posting of Prop 187 supporters who keep r[illegible]ing about how much they hate Mexicans that lead the rest of us to address the issue. Sorry dear, but they started this talk. Take Care ..." (Prodigy, Nov. 5)
Very friendly:	"Out-damn-standing! We must have shared something in another life for you to be rendering one of my all time favorite quotes. ... " (Prodigy, Oct. 20)

And here are additional examples of the three types of messages referred to in the paper:

Opinion:	"Robb would simply follow in his father-in-law's footsteps. He would be real generous with other people's money. ... North is a true patriot, risking his life against communism. Character counts, and North has it all over Robb. ..." (Prodigy, Oct. 29)

ENDNOTES, continued

Information: "I don't know if you can find indexed and bound back issues of that lofty journal "People Today," but someone sent me an article from it on John-Roger a couple of years ago. A former Mormon, he went the EST route for the big bucks...Maybe the L.A. Times, which some libraries have on microfilm, has more..." [ellipses in original] (AoL, Oct. 5)

Personal Attack: "YOU REALLY ARE PARANOID - YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR NOTE BEING PULLED! BUT I THINK YOU'RE PULLING SOMETHING TOO MUCH." [caps in original] (Prodigy, Oct. 4)

8) Myers, for example, found that heavy bulletin board users seek to create and maintain unique identities online; it is, for many, a liberating process of self-creation. "You can make the character behind the alias exactly like you, nothing like you, a combination of both, or even make it vary depending on the situation," explained one of his board participants, age 14, who went by the online alias "The Professor." "If you use an alias, you can say pretty much what you want without others pinning what you say to your real name. In `real life,' you have to wear a mask, trying not to say the wrong thing ... under an alias, it doesn't matter" (Myers, 1987).

9) Of note, as well, is the reaction this man with the Hispanic surname drew from other members. He was the object of some of the most intense "flaming" encountered all in the sample messages. One woman, in particular, claimed repeatedly that he did not even "really exist" because his Prodigy ID indicated he was not the user to whom the bill is sent each month:

> You are not an `A' member, therefore, Who knows if you are really who you say you are or just someone trying to act like you're a hispanic with flag to wave ... You are probably not even a real CA resident. May not even be a citizen. Who knows or cares. A good nickname for you would be `Foghorn.'

10) For example, 248 unique individuals were responsible for the messages included in the pre-election sample for both services, for an overall average of about two messages per participant. On Prodigy, where the bulletin board structure facilitated a conversation among users, approximately 39.5 percent of the board participants included in the sample posted more than one note or reply during this period; nine people posted 10 or more sampled messages.

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The author also needs to acknowledge that she is a former employee and manager with Prodigy Services Co. and has personal experience as a bulletin board operator for this service. She was not employed by Prodigy while conducting the research described here.

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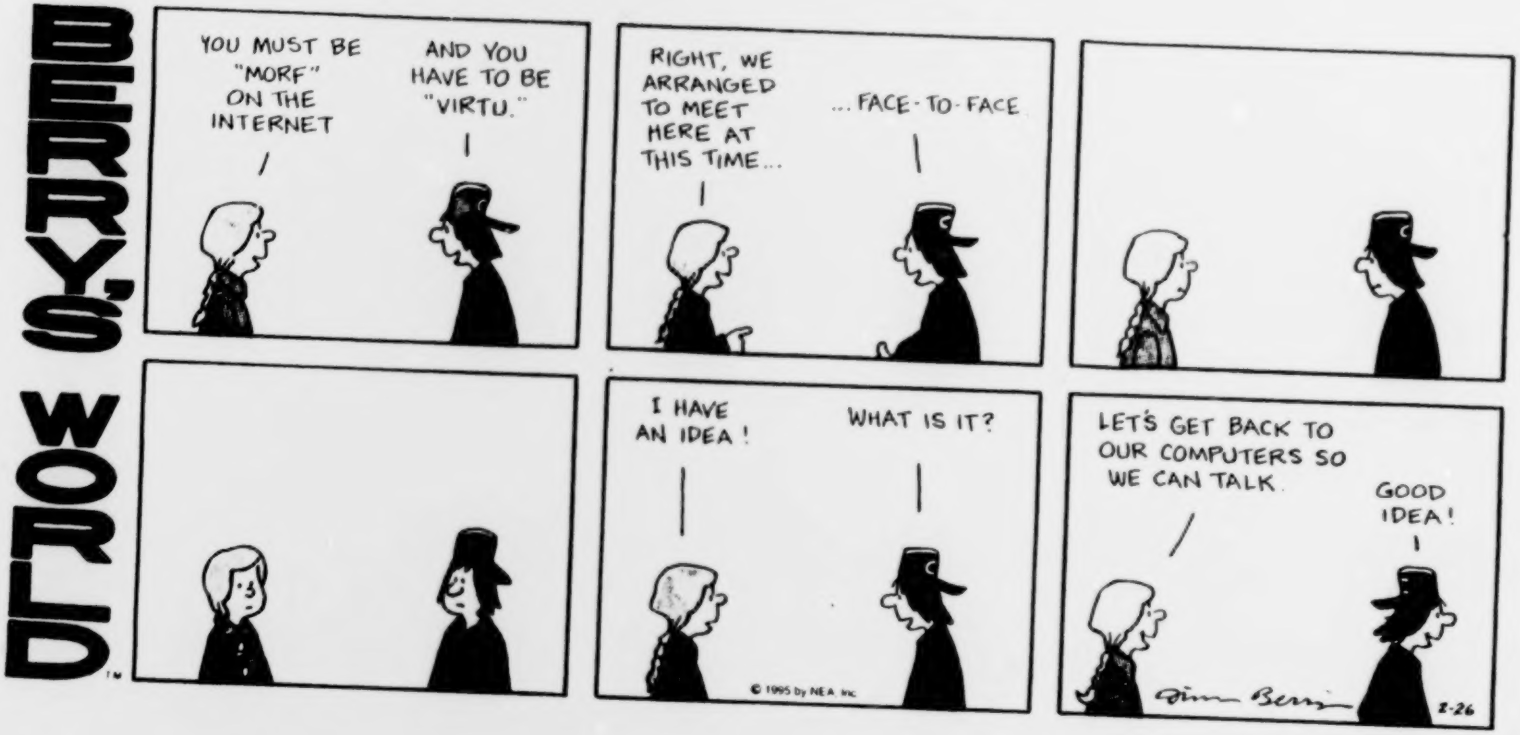
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AND YOU HAVE TO BE "VIRTU."
RIGHT, WE ARRANGED TO MEET HERE AT THIS TIME...
...FACE-TO-FACE.
I HAVE AN IDEA!
WHAT IS IT?
LET'S GET BACK TO OUR COMPUTERS SO WE CAN TALK.
GOOD IDEA!
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The Case of the Mysterious Ritual:
Murder, She Wrote and *Perry Mason*

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The Case of the Mysterious Ritual: *Murder, She Wrote* and *Perry Mason*

Abstract

The author suggests, through textual analysis, that television's traditional mystery formula encourages audiences to view these programs ritually. Two classic examples, *Murder, She Wrote* and *Perry Mason*, are compared for similar elements. Citing research linking the genre with elderly women viewers, the author sets an agenda for ethnographic study of this relationship. Through qualitative methods, the author suggests, research can show how ritualistic television viewing fits into the everyday lives of the elderly.

The Case of the Mysterious Ritual: *Murder, She Wrote* and *Perry Mason*

If *Murder, She Wrote* were the game of Clue, we could say that Jessica Fletcher did it in the TV room with a skewer--every Sunday night for ten years. Mass media research long has demonstrated that older women count the mystery genre among their favorite television choices, but little work has been done that offers to explain why.[1] This article relies on textual analysis to suggest that programs such as *Murder, She Wrote* and its early television cousin, *Perry Mason*, draw viewers--many of them older women--to a form that rewards ritualized consumption of television. It further suggests that ethnographic methods might be used to interpret the nature of that ritualized viewing experience.

Mystery and detective programs have supplied the broadcast networks with popular content fairly consistently since the days of radio. For example, *Perry Mason* was a radio serial drama on the CBS network from 1943 to 1955 before becoming a CBS television episodic drama, running from 1957 to 1966 (Brooks and Marsh, 1981, and McNeil, 1991). In the mid-1980s, CBS scheduled what would be its most successful mystery series ever, *Murder, She Wrote*, starring Angela Lansbury as aging amateur sleuth Jessica Fletcher.[2] The mystery-detective genre peaked in popularity during the 1974-75 season, when four series made the list of the top twenty rated programs by the A.C. Neilsen Co.[3] More than two decades later, the mystery format has become tired and less reliable for networks, which compete with more channels and other entertainment forms for the attention of high-spending audiences. Advertisers desire a younger audience than the 50-year-olds and their seniors who flock to *Murder, She Wrote* each Sunday evening. *Murder's* competitor on ABC, *Lois and Clark*, hails about $16,000 more for each 30-second commercial spot even though it has ranked much lower in ratings.[4]

As far back as 1976, John Cawelti offered aesthetic reasons for the decline of the mystery genre: Its highly articulated structure has made it resistant to change, which it needs to maintain appeal among audiences who eventually grow tired of repetition. It is no accident that mystery and detective programs tend to skew toward older audiences, who may find the genre comfortable compared with more experimental programs. For example, the Fox network has purposely attracted younger viewers through programs with brassy, quick-paced styles and, occasionally, radical or fused forms, such as *The Simpsons*. Programs with their roots in the mystery, lawyer, or detective genre, such as *Moonlighting*, *L.A. Law*, and *Twin Peaks*, were able to attract younger viewers to various degrees because they broke from hackneyed formulas of the past.

The classical mystery is inextricably linked to the traditional detective and lawyer genres. The original *Perry Mason* series appearing in the 1950s and '60s (and the revival series of the early 1970s), as well as the *Perry Mason* television movies produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is a lawyer show in the traditional mold. It follows a mystery formula very close to that of *Murder, She Wrote*: The hero encounters a dead person and a wrongly accused bystander, then goes to work uncovering clues about a handful of guest-star suspects, resulting in a climactic revelation of the real killer's identity. More often than not, the killer confesses. Order is restored, and relations are normalized. *Matlock*, a traditional lawyer show that has been popular among older viewers during the *Murder, She Wrote* era, is similar in formula.[5]

As the mystery genre has receded from prominence, *Murder, She Wrote* has served as a notable exception. Despite its undesirable skew, CBS has been able to depend on it to deliver audiences for advertisers while much of the network's prime time schedule has grown weak (The Associated Press, Nov. 11, 1994). Angela Lansbury, the star of the program, has, herself, spoken out against what she considers a double standard in ratings logic. Likewise, the Gray Panthers, an advocacy group for seniors, criticized the advertising industry's "ageism" and questioned its logic in light of national trends indicating the general aging of the U. S. population and the rising wealth of elder Americans (Farhi, 1994). *Murder, She Wrote*'s overwhelming popularity with elder viewers has not brought it critical acclaim. Except for its emphasis on an aging female character, it is just another example of its genre. Its faithfulness to its type is, for the purposes here, what makes it worth studying.

Studying a Dying Genre

If the mystery's era has waned, why is it important to study examples of the genre, and why is it important to study the uses viewers make of it? The mystery and related genres, such as the classical detective show, remain important to many older viewers within the so-called television audience. Television tends to play a significant role in the lives of elderly women (Comstock, 1978, Davis & Westbrook, 1985).[6] Learning something about how favorite texts figure into their everyday lives can help us to explain how older viewers use media to construct meaning (Tulloch, 1989). Ang (1994) has argued in favor of studying the microsituations of elderly viewers in order to work toward ethnographic understanding of diverse people who are part of the so-called television audience.

Morley (1992) and Silverstone and Hirsch (1992) have argued that television--as a medium and as an assembly of texts--is *consumed* by people as an act of everyday life, and, through this activity, people construct meaning. Some of this consumption, as suggested by the work of these authors, is highly ritualistic: In the context of our domestic settings, we regularly and even ceremonially engage certain television texts to fit our situations. The symbolic meaning that the texts carry for us is contingent on where we may be positioned as cultural subjects. In order to gain as complete an understanding as possible about such culturally produced meaning, Tulloch (1990) has insisted that scholars must study not only the reception of the message, but its production, and the message itself. This paper begins with the text and sets an agenda for more complete study.

The project aims to begin probing the relationship between texts that encourage ritualistic use and their actual uses by elements in the texts that may encourage particular meanings. As Morley (1992) has suggested, "the audience [is] multiply embedded in a consumer culture in which technologies and messages are juxtaposed, both implicated in the creation of meaning, in the creation of possibilities of everyday life" (p. 212). He perceives consumption of television as a rhetorical activity involving both the situated audience member and the production of culturally charged messages. The empirical work intended to explore the ritual uses of the mystery genre by older women viewers--one such multiply embedded audience, in Morley's terms--will follow this work. However, in order to contextualize the ritual use encouraged by such texts, I offer some comments I have collected from elderly women who consider themselves "fans" of mystery shows. These comments help to suggest the saliency of what Ang has identified as "microsituations" in interpreting how a texts are linked with acts of ritual.

In the early 1990s, while doing fieldwork for my dissertation on television use in a Midwestern retirement community, I heard numerous stories from women who told me that watching *Murder, She Wrote* was something they always did on Sunday nights, whether they lived alone or with a spouse. Some habitually prepared a favorite snack or engaged in other routinized activities along with viewing this special program. What seemed more important to them is that they tended to look upon the experience of seeing the program--and Lansbury--as a bright spot in their week, a way of marking the end of the week, in many cases.

Eighty-year-old Fostine told me she didn't mind that *Murder, She Wrote*'s plots involved incredible coincidences and its endings often were predictable for her:

> I like the way she [Jessica Fletcher] works things out so neatly. Oh, of course, you couldn't possibly believe that all those murders could take place in that little village of Cabot Cove or that the same nephew had been arrested on suspicion of murder three or four times--or even that the same guest star had appeared in different episodes playing different roles.[8] I treat each episode as a different story. I enjoy *that* story and don't worry about all the coincidences.

Fostine said the variety of possibilities--in the circumstances and method of the murder, the scene of the mystery (which often involves glamorous or exotic locations), and Jessica's means of solving the mystery--made the show seem "inventive" to her, despite its repetitive storylines.

Another woman, 77-year-old Jackie, said she liked watching "the old Perry Mason reruns" on cable channels for similar reasons:

> Of course, one lawyer would never just happen to turn up when so many dead bodies are discovered. But that's part of the fun of the program. I mean, you can count on Perry going through every step of the way--uncovering each person's motive, maybe making one person look guilty when it turns out at the last minute they have an alibi, and then, finally, that courtroom scene, when he catches them and makes them confess. It works out clean every time.

Jackie said she remembered having watched *Perry Mason* often when it was broadcast on CBS but wasn't "a regular fan." In her retirement years, she watched the program two or three mornings a week and also enjoyed *Murder, She Wrote* on cable. "[Watching] is something I like to fit into my routine," she said. "It isn't important, really, but, if I'm home, I watch. It's kind of the high point of the morning, a nice way of marking that point in the day."

Jackie compared *Murder, She Wrote* to the 1970s and '80s series *The Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island*, shows that featured ensembles of recognizable guest stars. "My husband and I used to watch to see stars we used to see, and talk about how they'd changed or how we hadn't seen them around," she said. "Sometimes I find this is true, to some degree, with *Murder, She Wrote*. Somebody is always turning up there."

While it is apparent that people engage such texts as *Murder, She Wrote* and *Perry Mason* ritually, we can look to these texts to understand how their producers have made them suitable for such consumption. I am contending that these programs and those like them suggest an occupation with television as ritual more than they do the significance of a genre's aesthetic value and that industry programmers operate with this belief. Newcomb and Hirsch (1994), in fact, suggest that understanding ritual aspects of a text helps us to see the ways in which television functions as a cultural forum and should take precedence over considering the critical aesthete of the text.

Television is rich with programs that encourage ritualized viewing. Sporting contests, daily news productions, game shows, soap operas, and other highly redundant forms attract viewers who, for diverse reasons, enjoy the ritual of regular viewing.[6] Newcomb (1994) asserts that much of television viewing is ritualized, with people being attracted to the same programs in the same time slots week after week or day after day. In this case, programs such as *Murder, She Wrote*, whose structures are tightly formulaic, may cause us to notice their ritual nature because of their lack of innovation. Their ring of familiarity--their assurance that an expected problem will be worked out through a method that we expect, leaving us satisfied at the end --continues to draw an audience of the faithful.

Formula stories occur in a dialectical relationship with the culture whose lessons and experiences they address and whose expectations they inflect. Audiences ritually return to examples of predictable structures that confront them with problems that are relevant to their lives and solutions that favor existing power relations while allowing room to explore moral boundaries (Cawelti 1976). (While the subject of murder may not be so relevant for most viewers, the problematic surrounding the murder often *is*--motivations of the human psyche, troubled interpersonal relationships, as Feuer (1994) has suggested about melodrama.) Ritual exploration of moral boundaries is often a strong subtext of the murder mystery. Perry Mason, for example, virtually always won his case, ensuring that no murderer, no matter the motive, would get away without facing the authorities.

While texts such as *Perry Mason* and *Murder, She Wrote* may function as escapist communication forms, the ritual connection between such texts and their audiences also has to do with preserving self-identity. For elderly people, particularly, ritual forms of communication may serve as a means of continual validation of the self in a stage of life when one's identity may be in doubt. Myerhoff (1992) found that ritual storytelling among elderly members of a Jewish senior center in California, helped residents continue to focus on the core values of their lives and the stability of their relationships with one another. Myerhoff (1984) observed:

> Ritual alters our ordinary sense of time, repudiating meaningless change and discontinuity by emphasizing regularity, precedent, and order. Paradoxically, it uses repetition to deny the empty repetitiveness of unremarked, unattended human and social experience. From repetition, it finds or makes patterns, and looks at these for hints linked with the past and incorporated into a larger framework .... (p. 173)

Both Fostine and Jackie spoke about the rewards they perceived in mystery programs that repeatedly worked out problems neatly. They enjoyed watching the hero ensure the restoration of order, and, in Jackie's case, she also felt rewarded by watching television stars from the past, moving through life's stages similarly to her.

In the following section, I will address ways in which the texts of *Perry Mason* and *Murder, She Wrote* encourage ritualistic consumption. In the concluding section, I will suggest a special ritual link between these texts, as representative of their genre, and elderly women viewers.

Perry and Jessica: The More Things Change ....

Perry Mason could hardly be considered "high-quality" or even realistic television by today's critical standards: Its stark *mise-en-scene*, developed for television in its youth, lacks the richness of latter-day lawyer and mystery shows, for example. Its dialogue reflects a Fifties naivete and utter white-male dominance. The character of private detective Paul Drake, for instance, is positively portrayed as a straight-arrow type; at the same time, he gets smiles from secretary Della Street when he refers to her in such terms as "Doll."[9] *Perry Mason*, in fact, with its pat, unified plotlines and highly formulaic structure, seems corny when weighed against the messy, multi-dimensional drama of *Law and Order*. Due to its fusion with other genres (cop show and soap opera), its delving into inner conflicts of characters, more diffused focus on the cast of characters, and resistance to happy endings, *Law and Order* typifies the evolution of the lawyer genre.

The deep structure of *Murder, She Wrote*, with its simple plot structure, concentration on one major character, and ultimate, positive solution to the episode's problem, is much like that of *Perry Mason*. Collins and Javna (1988) observe that *Mason* extends "beyond formula into ritual," and we can perceive *Murder, She Wrote* in similar terms:

> A horrible human being, despised by one and all, is murdered; accused of the crime is an innocent who finds her (or his, but usually her) way to the office of defense attorney Perry Mason. Mason, detective Drake and secretary Della Street set out to solve the crime in private-eye fashion, talking to witnesses, examining the clues, dueling with the police, led by the luckless Lt. Arthur Tragg (p. 29).

Collins and Javna go on to describe the ensuing courtroom battle between Mason and his nemesis, prosecutor Hamilton Burger, and Mason's unmasking of the real murderer, which usually forces out a courtroom confession. *Murder, She Wrote*'s chief differences are Jessica Fletcher's amateur status and, thus, lack of an investigative staff, her frequent travel to different locations (Mason was based in Los Angeles and generally solved his mysteries there), her unmasking of the murderer in an informal setting, and the unusual age and gender status of her character. *Murder, She Wrote* is the first long-running mystery/detective series to feature a woman in the leading role, and no such series has featured an older woman as the central character. Older men (*Matlock*, *Columbo*, *Perry Mason* movies) are more common.

While Jessica Fletcher's distinct characteristics of age and gender may be important to viewers, other aspects of the series' deep structure that make the program similar to *Mason* are integral to its success with older female viewers. In addition to the plot formula, other strategies help form the series narrative. In the cases of *Mason* and *Murder*, for instance, little series development takes place, and the main characters do not change much because of their involvement in the "stories" of the series. For example, Perry Mason does, over the course of the series, accrue status as a reputed legendary trial attorney, and he also assumes growing familiarity with the supporting characters as the series goes on. However, the nature of the character relationships does not radically change. Neither Perry nor Della, for instance, is shown to have a life outside the office, and an implicit hint of sexual tension between the characters is suggested throughout the life of the series. Although the familiarity between the two deepens, they never consummate their affection, a reflection, perhaps of both the producers' wishes to maintain the tension and the celibate nature of dramatic characters on television in the age of the repressive 1950s and early '60s.

Likewise, the *Murder, She Wrote* series does not have much of a memory. A few functional changes occur, including minor cast changes. (For instance, Cabot Cove got a new sheriff when actor Tom Bosley got his own mystery drama and the character of Sheriff Amos Tupper was eliminated.) A few theme-related changes contribute to the growth of the Fletcher character. For example, Jessica changes, gradually, from a dowdy, small-town mystery writer clinging to her manual typewriter and bicycle to a sophisticated, computer-operating New Yorker who gets around mostly in cabs and on jet planes. Her character, that of a well-mannered, pleasant, and curious woman with excellent judgment, remains intact, however. Like *Perry Mason*, *Murder, She Wrote* limits the realm of the personal to the extent that Jessica

Fletcher almost never engages in a social relationship for story purposes other than advancing the mystery plot line. She has expressed a romantic interest in a man only twice in ten years. Of these men, one turned out to be the murderer and had to be sent, through Jessica's efforts, to prison. In an unusual development, the character turned up on an episode during a subsequent season only to become the murder victim. She told the second suitor that she preferred her Maine lifestyle to his Texas one.

Murder, She Wrote and *Perry Mason* may appeal to older women viewers, in part, because they feature the process of working out a problem that is comfortingly manageable. This characteristic may represent a blend of gendered styles--a traditionally male emphasis on closure that may appeal more to older (and, often, more conservative) women than to younger ones and a traditionally female emphasis on process. Fiske (1987) has suggested that some television genres are traditionally masculine and others are traditionally feminine. He posits that, most significantly, the former are driven by action and closure and the latter are concerned with process. Using the examples of *Cagney and Lacey* and *Hill Street Blues*, Fiske suggests that some programs can exist as mixtures of masculine and feminine genres. He cites, for example, these programs' tendency to equate in significance the process of the story with the episodic outcome.

The examples of the mystery genre explored in this paper can also be submitted as blends of the masculine and feminine forms.

Neither of the programs emphasizes the physical, with the general exception of the murder event; both emphasize the mental process of solving the crime. Yet, in both series, the climactic moment occurs when the hero exercises cerebral superiority over the offender and, effectively, captures him or her in a snare of logic. Perry or Jessica, in verbally upbraiding the villain and freeing the distressed damsel (female or male) who stands hopelessly accused of the crime, is no less the virile hero than if he or she had chased the villain down in a red Ferrari. Still, the process is more mannerly. Perry does his battle from the defense table, and Jessica, often, from the dinner table. Both become involved in feminine-styled discussions about motives, opportunities, and clues, whereas heroes from more masculine-oriented shows, such as *Mannix*, frequently found themselves involved in physical confrontation. Protected by the courtroom, Perry Mason rarely found himself with his life threatened by the murderer. Occasionally, Jessica Fletcher confronts the villain privately and has her safety threatened, but she is almost never involved in a physical struggle.

On other levels, however, both *Perry* and *Murder* reflect the traditional terrain of masculine texts. For example, a feminine-style text about murder might be expected to dwell on the emotional consequences of the crime--as in a made-for-television movie. Perry Mason never displays emotions about the victim's loss, going straight, instead, into the crime-solving process. Jessica Fletcher, upon discovering "the body," often briefly grimaces, then, like Mason, sets about solving the puzzle. Many times, she has appeared in a black dress at a wake or funeral but only to advance the plot by collecting clues there.

Also reflective of masculine genres is both series' tendencies to employ agents of white patriarchy, unmistakably good guys, to orchestrate the restoration of order from chaos. In the heat of investigation, however, both heroes explore the boundaries of legitimacy in order to find "truth." This type of action, concerned more with rightness than with authority, may suggest a feminizing of the text. Perry Mason often makes decisions that, temporarily, cause the authorities around him to question his ethics. He skirts the law on such matters as tampering with or withholding evidence, failure to report a homicide, and perjury--offenses that, on their face, clearly oppose cultural values. Truth and justice ultimately prevail, as part of Mason's design, but the story encourages us to consider opposing values--an innocent person's right to freedom versus adherence to the letter of the law.

Perry never breaks the rules but bends them to suit his needs in a ritualistic game of wits against the authorities who have the wrong killer. In one episode, for example, a quintessentially helpless maiden approaches him for assistance, which she needs imminently, but she is financially embarrassed. Perry asks her how much change she has in her purse. "Thirty-eight cents," she answers. He takes it and declares himself legally retained as her counsel. (An oppositional reading might see some irony in a lawyer taking a poor "victim's" last thirty-eight cents.) Occasionally, Perry, having unmasked the true killer, shows compassion for the person, with whose plight he sympathizes. His initial case won, he now will offer his services as defense attorney to the real killer. (Of course, the viewer never sees *those* cases.) Jessica Fletcher, in *Murder, She Wrote*, has, on numerous occasions, exercised similar compassion for the offender whom her sleuthing has identified. For example, in one program from the late 1980s, the "murderer" turns out to be a young, pregnant Amish woman who killed her evil lover with a pitchfork in self-defense. In a common ending for the show, the mystery concludes with Jessica, having uncovered the truth, happily assuring the woman that the law would be lenient with her. (Of course, Jessica does not stick around to help the woman navigate her course through the legal system.)

Another way in which *Perry Mason* and *Murder, She Wrote* represent a blend of masculine and feminine genres is their heroes' blend of deductive reasoning and intuition to solve crimes. Both rely more heavily on logic, the traditional realm of male thinking. In a typical instance, Perry realizes the identity of a killer because police Lt. Tragg mistakenly suggests that Mason has accidentally tracked a feather from the murder scene into his office. Immediately, Perry knows the female visitor who left earlier must have brought the feather in on the bottom of *her* shoe and therefore must be the murderer. In a *Murder, She Wrote* plot, that, coincidentally, also involved a feather, Jessica figures out the killer's identity when she realizes the reason for a feather found (by her, of course) on the corpse. On the other hand, both Perry and Jessica intuit as well, although Perry relies on secretary Della to do much of his intuiting. These three characters--Perry, Della, and Jessica--all seem to be able to tell when someone is lying to them, and, perhaps more important to the story, when the falsely accused person is truthfully professing innocence. What is more, no other characters on these two programs, especially law officers, seem to have this ability.

In one way, in particular, *Murder, She Wrote* is a more feminine text than *Perry Mason*. While, as I have stated, *Murder* does not focus much on its history and is, instead, highly episodic, the program does offer occasional rewards for regular viewers. Recurring characters, such as nephew Grady, do appear, and occasional reference is made to his earlier "problem." Michael, a mysterious British MI-6 agent, occasionally appears, and Jessica always chides him for getting her into a previous jam. Such references award longtime, loyal viewers with a special intimacy and tend to focus, for a moment, on Jessica's life as process. Still, these references are so simple and brief as not to confuse the naive or forgetful viewer who may be concerned only with the current storyline.

Murder, She Wrote bears a feminine style in another way as well. Jessica Fletcher is not an officer of the court like Perry Mason; she is an amateur.[10] She is an older woman who bravely speaks up when "the system" is about to punish the wrong person for a grave crime, and she successfully challenges authority. In doing so, however, she is almost self-deprecating, telling various lawmen, "Of course, I wouldn't dream of telling you how to do your job, but ..." or "I just write mystery stories, and I'd like to help." She ably leaves the murderer in the hands of the authorities, reinstating their legitimacy after winking at us behind their backs. Then, she returns to her home in Cabot Cove (or New York) to whip out another harmless mystery novel.

Conclusion

The standard devices detailed here, together, tend to suggest that *Perry Mason* and *Murder, She Wrote*, as traditional mystery dramas, borrow from both masculine and feminine television styles. These devices help to ritually construct the episodes of these dramas so as to encourage regular production of meaning among the individuals who select them for use in their own lives. Just how that production of meaning takes place for individuals--and how people ritually engage the texts of such programs--has not been probed. The next step for this line of research will be to go to the sources of ritual-making: the elderly women who patronize the mystery genre. This research will need to explore the link between, on the one hand, the texts that seem to encourage ritual use through their content and form, and, on the other hand, the audience members who routinely fit the texts into their everyday lives.

As Cawelti (1976) has argued, empirical audience research is the necessary validation for textual analysis:

> Peronally, I think that the most disappointing aspect of the present study is my ability to substantiate many of the speculations I have offered concerning the cultural significance of the different formulas I have discussed. In particular, there is a lack of solid data about audiences for the various formulas (298).

The kind of "data" I hope to find to "substantiate" a ritual interpretation of the mystery genre is ethnographic in nature. It is already established, as stated earlier in this paper, that this ritual-laden genre attracts large numbers of elderly women viewers. The research questions that remain, for audience research, are, how do members of such an audience use the genre and where does it fit into the broader circumstances of their lives? I expect to find connections between the smaller context of ritual in the television viewing done by these older women and the larger context of ritual in their lives as aging women in American society. By talking with many of them at length about their mystery "fanhood," I hope to be able to understand how such connections might occur. In particular, I hope to be able to highlight the nature of the meaning making that may be shared by women of various social backgrounds. I also hope to be able to talk about some of the ways in which women of various class and ethnic backgrounds and different old-age cohorts approach these texts distinctly. By understanding the interpretations and uses that people share as well as those that distinguish them from one another, we can collect a somewhat well rounded picture of how older women construct meaning from acts of ritual.

It is through the uncovering of such connections between mass culture and everyday life--the messiness of how people use media--that we can further understand culture. As Pauly (1990) has suggested, we may study narrow problems in depth, through the use of qualitative methods, in order to show how our research questions reflect a broader set of concerns. If we can understand the significance of television and ritual in this narrow context, we may learn something about what it means to be old and female in this culture.

END NOTES

[1] Comstock et al., 1978, show that older women and men as well as middle-aged women frequently watch suspense and mystery programs. My ethnographic research in a Midwestern retirement community (Riggs, 1994) uncovered a keen interest in classical mystery and detective dramas among elderly women there.

[2] Created by Richard Levinson, William Link, and Peter S. Fischer, the series premiered with CBS's fall 1984 lineup, when star Angela Lansbury was 59 years old. It quickly became a network staple, dependably winning its time slot and generally finishing in the Nielsen top ten.

[3] According to McNeil (1991), *The Rockford Files* was number 12, *Mannix* was 19, and *Cannon* and *The NBC Sunday Mystery Movie* tied for 20. Other programs oriented toward the mystery formula in the top twenty included *Kojak* and *Hawaii Five-O*. *Kojak*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Mannix*, and *Cannon* all were CBS series.

[4] According to Betsy Sharkey (1994) of *The New York Times*, a thirty-second commercial could be had in the fall 1994 season on *Murder, She Wrote*, for $116,000. This series placed number 16 in the May 1994 sweeps rating period for prime-time programming, substantially higher than ninety-fourth place *Lois and Clark*, whose viewers skew much younger. A thirty-second spot on *Lois and Clark* cost $132,000 in fall 1994.

[5] All these programs bear a resemblance in form to the traditional drawing-room mystery found in literature, as typified by Agatha Christie in the 1920s and '30s. For a more detailed

explanation of the mystery formula, see Cawelti (1976) and Collins and Javna (1988).

[6] In terms of sheer exposure, women age 55 and older watch more television than any other demographic age group--41 hours a week in 1989 (Hickey, 1989).

[7] For example, Fiske (1987) posits the quiz show as an enactment of capitalist ideology through its rituals of emphasizing the personal differences among the competitors in the introductory segment and establishing the triumph of the winner at the end through ritualistic celebration that includes emphasis on material prizes.

[8] The character Jessica Fletcher lives in Cabot Cove, Maine, a fishing village. Of the program's more than 250 murders to date, approximately one fifth, or fifty, have taken place in this otherwise "tranquil" hamlet (The Associated Press, Nov. 11, 1994). In the last several years, Jessica, a famous mystery novelist, has kept an apartment in Manhattan, an arrangement that conveniently has frequently allowed her to be on hand to solve murders in New York.

[9] In the made-for-television *Perry Mason* movies, set in the late 1980s and early 1990s, characters reflect changing times. Della Street acts less deferentially to Mason, often winning her boss over to her view. The two private detective characters, including the first, Paul Drake Jr., act with more recklessness and worldliness than the original, flat Paul Drake showed. The first Paul Drake wore light-colored suits, smoked cigarettes, and

commented wryly on his investigations; the latter detectives got into fistfights, car chases, and messy relationships.

[10] Klein (1988), in making a case that detective stories tend to support male hegemony, has suggested that it is significant when a woman detective lacks the official status of detective we most often see connected with male detectives: "When detectives are amateurs, they can be ignored and their behavior seen as a momentary intrusion into public life. And, the changes in social organization which would arise from women's active participation in public life, disruption of economic activity, and involvement in the political process could be dismissed as short-lived and inconsequential."

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Running head: POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE EARLY BLACK PRESS

Political Issues in the Early Black Press:

Applying Frame Analysis to Historical Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines political issues that appeared in the Black and mainstream press in Wichita, Kansas during the mid-1890s. Content analysis and interpretative framing packages are used to identify, analyze, and compare issues and frames found in a Black newspaper and a general circulation White paper. Race and political ideology played key roles in framing political issues, which accounts for the similarities and differences between issues and frames used by the newspapers.

POLITICAL ISSUES IN THE EARLY BLACK PRESS: APPLYING FRAME ANALYSIS TO HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Since Freedom's Journal was published in 1827, the Black press has served as a voice for Black Americans who often have been ridiculed, stereotyped, or ignored by the mainstream press (Pride, 1956; Kessler, 1984; Dates & Barlow, 1990; Wolseley, 1990).[1] Black editors have used their newspapers as channels to inform and persuade their readers. Frequently, research of the early Black press has focused on how the newspapers functioned for their readership. These studies reveal that early Black newspapers promoted positive individual and community identities, denounced the unjust conditions endured by Blacks, and advocated for social and political change (Thornbrough, 1966; Barrows, 1977-78; Krieling, 1977-78; Nordin, 1977-78; Strother, 1978; O'Kelly, 1982; Kessler, 1984; Cooper, 1986; Klassen & Johnson, 1986; Williams, 1989; Berardi & Segady, 1990; Stevens & Johnson, 1990; Wolseley, 1990). While previous research has identified the role of the Black press as an alternative voice to the mainstream press, little direction has been given in empirical methods that guide the comparison of the communication styles for Black and mainstream presses.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

As part of its function to inform constituents, one of the most prominent roles of the Black press has been to present the political and social concerns of the day to its readers. Although examinations of Black newspapers have shown consistent themes associated with social and political consciousness and found that the publications have functioned to promote change, a void exists. Little archival research has compared particular issues and their subtexts in Black newspapers with those in the general press. In particular, researchers have not compared political issues found in early Black and mainstream newspapers or how those specific issues were framed for their readers. How have political issues been presented in Black newspapers? Using an empirical method that inductively approaches the study of communication, this study examines the communication of political issues in Black newspapers by comparing and analyzing the issues found in two weekly concurrent publications--one mainstream and one Black newspaper.

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[1] In order to provide continuity throughout this paper, the term "Black" is used to be inclusive of all references to African American, Afro-American, Negro, and colored as connotative terms. This form was chosen to follow the precedent of historian Roland Wolseley (1990) in The Black Press, USA, a survey of the Black press. The term "mainstream" designates general circulation newspapers.

In particular, this study investigates the similarities and differences in the presentation of political issues by a Black newspaper and the mainstream press of Wichita, Kansas, during the mid-1890s. The goal of this research is to answer the following questions: (a) What political issues were addressed in the Black newspaper, (b) how did the newspaper frame those issues, and (c) how did the issues and frames of reference of the Black newspaper compare with those addressed by a general-circulation White paper?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Until recently, qualitative research as a tool in mass communication studies has been neglected. A resurgence of interest is now developing in the field, much of it influenced by the research of Goffman (1974). Studying mass communication in an interpretive manner can be traced to the beginnings of communication research. Walter Lippman (1922) wrote of shaping messages in the media, as well as the interface of media and public in shaping social reality. Scholars at the Chicago School, such as John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Robert E. Parks, emphasized the subjectivity of communication and used an interpretive approach to study the communication process (Rogers, 1993). Parks, who helped pioneer mass communication research, studied the immigrant press and the influence of media content on public opinion (Rogers, 1993).

One interpretive paradigm used to study mass communication is framing (Entman, 1993). The orientation of framing was derived from Goffman's (1974) denotation of information. Without some sort of organization, experiences have no meaning (Goffman, 1974). Goffman (1974) coined the term "frame" to denote a method of organization that enables individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of occurrences" into something meaningful (p. 21). According to Goffman (1974), people are often unaware of the framework of everyday life, even though frames of reference are perceptual structures that organize individual interpretations. People use similar processes to frame events -- whether it is a drama, dance, a newspaper story, political cartoon or everyday conversation.

Goffman's ideas were adapted by Gitlin (1980) to the analysis of media. Media framing, according to Gitlin, is a way journalists organize and package information and events for their audience. Gitlin (1980) defined media frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, presentation, selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (p. 7). In particular, researchers have used frame analysis to study political issues in the media, such as social welfare, affirmative action, nuclear power, and international incidents (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gamson, 1988; Gamson, & Modigliani, 1989; Entman, 1991).

Gamson and Lasch (1983) identified interpretive framing packages to analyze issues in the media. The packages were composed of core frames and framing devices that structured the same issue in different ways. Gamson (1988) referred to these cluster of ideas as "issue packages." It should be noted here that frames do not infer whether individuals take a pro or con position on any issue, but, instead, allow for a range of positions concerning a particular issue (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). A viable frame will incorporate and give meaning to events that occur over time.

An important issue in communication studies is comparing the style of communication across different social settings and different eras of time. While frame analysis has been applied effectively to the examination of political issues in current media, this research paradigm can also be used in the analysis of the historical press. A setting and era rich in political debate was Kansas, traditionally a Republican state, in the mid-1890s. It was a time of political unrest that included a growing third-party movement--the People's or Populist party (Nugent, 1963; Chafe, 1968). In particular, the election year of 1894 found the state's incumbent governor, a Populist and Wichita native, running for re-election. During that time, the political climate rose to a crescendo, thus influencing the public debate of political issues in Wichita (Nugent, 1963; Clanton, 1969; Miner, 1988).

METHOD

Content analysis is a systematic and objective method that identifies specific characteristics of messages in the communication process (Holsti, 1969). This methodology is a useful tool to describe communication messages in newspapers. Content analysis answers questions such as: What are the messages, e.g., issues; and how are the messages, e.g., issues, presented? Thus, content analysis was used in this study to examine political issues at a one point in time.

The primary objective of the research was to discover the communication processes regarding political issues in Wichita's Black community during the 1890s. To keep the research manageable, it was necessary to confine the focus to particular newspapers that were published in a specific time period. The political activity during this time became one of the determining factors in choosing the sample of newspapers for examination.

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research brings some inherent weakness and researcher bias (Hsai, 1988). The choice of data was determined by what was accessible to the researchers. Results in this study could be skewed due to small sample size, which was limited to what had been preserved on microfilm. This study examined only two papers over a period of about four months. One cannot draw definite conclusions that are valid for all Black or mainstream newspapers in Wichita from this sample and no such attempt was made. Analysis was restricted to the material under consideration and conclusions were drawn relative to the issues as presented in the selected texts. Since the Black press fills a gap overlooked by the mainstream press, one can except to find differences between the newspapers. As Kansas residents looking at Wichita papers, some researcher bias is inevitable. In content analysis, there is the potential of researcher bias in the definition and framework of the content categories (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). In order to mitigate the possibility of subjective interpretation and analysis of the two newspapers, a triangulation of methods was used. In conjunction with content analysis, historical data were investigated, including both primary and secondary sources, to verify results.

Sampling

Historical data were gathered from two newspapers that were published in Wichita during the mid-1890s: (a) The People's Friend, a Republican-affiliated Black newspaper; and (b) The Kansas Star, a Republican general circulation newspaper.[2] Both were published in 1894, during the height of the Populist movement in Kansas. Extant copies were available on microfilm and accessible to the researchers.

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[2] Henceforth, The People's Friend and The Kansas Star, will be referred to as the Friend and the Star.

Numerous daily and weekly newspapers were published in Wichita during this time, including morning and evening papers. This study was limited to one Black newspaper that was compared with a general-circulation newspaper. The Friend and the Star were chosen for the study because both were published weekly in 1894. From May 24, 1894, to Sept. 28, 1894, the Friend and the Star newspapers were published concurrently. This allowed for the comparison of issues that were addressed in different newspapers during the same time period. Also, both papers had the same political affiliation, the Republican party. Though extant copies of the Star were available from 1890 to 1901, the sampling was limited to the same time period as the extant Black paper. The Friend began publication on May 24, 1894, and published its last issue less than five months later.

All of the newspaper issues from May 24 to Sept. 29, when the two newspapers published concurrently, were analyzed. This included: 18 issues of the Friend, May 24 to Sept. 28, 1894; and 19 issues of the Star, May 26, 1894, to Sept. 29, 1894. The June 7 issue of the Friend was not available.

Coding

The data were coded by the identification of interpretive packages, a method used by Gamson and Lasch (1983) in their analysis of the framing of the welfare issue in a variety of media. They approached media framing deductively. Use of Gamson and Lasch's method was designed to explicate how the two newspapers packaged political issues.

Gamson and Lasch (1983) identified two primary parts of interpretive framing packages. The first one is the core of the frame, which organizes the central idea of the issue; the second part is called signature elements and includes two categories--framing and reasoning devices. Framing elements, as Gamson and Lasch identified them, are metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images. Reasoning devices are underlying roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. By identifying the signature elements of a particular frame, Gamson (1989) noted that it is possible to code data in a reliable way.

This research makes use of the rationale of interpretive packages in compiling data dealing with political issues for the prescribed time period. Each newspaper in the sampling was examined. Copy excluded from coding were advertisements, business advertisements in editorial copy, fictional serials, and features. The primary focus of the study was to identify the political issues and compare the issues presented in the Black press with those identified in a mainstream Republican newspaper. Insightful information about the social history of the Black community of Wichita and the political environment/climate of the era also were noted.

Operationalizing "political issues" was a two-step process. First, a distinction was made between what constitutes a news "event" and what constitutes an "issue." A clarification of that differentiation was borrowed from a discussion by Rogers and Dearing (1988), who defined events as "discrete happenings that are limited by space and time" (p. 566). Issues, on the other hand, involve "cumulative news coverage of a series of related events that fit together in a broad category" (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 566). For example, the report of Pullman shop strikers breaking ranks in Chicago would be considered an event (The People's Friend, July 20, 1894, p. 2). The frame of this event of laborer unrest, along with strikes by coal miners and butchers, would be analyzed as part of the labor issue.

The second step necessitated defining the term "political." Political, according to Pennock and Smith (1964), refers to "...all that has to do with the forces, institutions, and organizational forms in any society that are recognized as having the most inclusive and final authority existing in that society for the establishment and maintenance of order, the effectuation of other conjoint purposes of its members, and the reconciliation of their differences". (p. 9) In essence, "political issues" in this study were defined as the general categorizations of events that relate to and influence societal forces, institutions, and organizational forms that are designated to establish and maintain order, mandate legislation, and resolve differences.

A reading of the two newspapers was conducted to identify political issues in the newspapers. A list of the common issues was made. These issues were analyzed according to interpretive schemata. A matrix of the common political issues was constructed to facilitate the comparison of the frame cores and signature elements. After the matrix was completed, the newspapers were coded by the issue frames. Analysis was conducted by comparing the issues that emerged from the data and how those issues were framed. At question was how the issues and framing of the Wichita Black press compared with the issues and framing of a general circulation paper during the mid-1890s.

RESULTS

In answering the research questions, the following discussion will focus on the principal political issues addressed by the Friend, a Black newspaper published in Wichita in the mid-1890s, and explain how the Friend presented those issues. The similarities and differences in the presentation and framing of political issues found in the Black newspaper and a general circulation paper of Wichita will be isolated, compared, and analyzed

Findings

Issues in the Black Newspapers

A compilation of the political issues addressed by the Friend from May 24 to Sept. 28, 1894, revealed 15 issues. This list included the following: the tariff on imports to the United States, labor, prohibition, government corruption, women's suffrage, income tax, political party fusion, federal government spending, foreign immigration, monopolies versus growth of private ownership, monetary silver/gold, civil rights, social mobility of blacks, lynching, and emigration by blacks (see Appendix A, Table 1).

Most of the issues that were identified in the newspapers were either race-related issues, or issues that were specified in either the Populist, Republican, or Democratic party platforms. The exception was party fusion. The Friend addressed four race-related political issues: civil rights, the social mobility of the race, lynching, and the emigration of blacks. No political issue listed on the Republican, Democrat, and Populist party platforms was notably absent in the Friend.

Even though the Friend presented issues that were unique to the concerns of their readers, several other issues received significant coverage. The most prominent issues in the Friend focused on the debate over tariffs on US imports, the status of the labor force, and issues of racial concern. Less prominent issues were silver/gold ratio, government corruption and prohibition.

Issue Frames Found in the Black Newspaper

The frames of five issues that were found in the Friend were examined: the tariff on US imports, labor, lynching, civil rights, and government corruption. The rationale for choosing these five issues was based on a compilation of the issues that were mentioned most frequently in the newspaper (see Appendix A, Table 1). For each issue, signature elements for the interpretative framing packages were identified (see Appendix A, Table 2). Complete explication of an interpretive framing package in this paper has been limited to one issue--the tariff. To contrast the interpretation of political party issues and issues of racial concern, the civil rights issue also will be discussed.

Tariff on US Imports

Protectionism package. As stated, the dominant political issue reported by the Friend, based upon number of stories, was the controversy over lifting import tariffs. The particular coverage focused on the Wilson tariff bill passed by Congress in 1894, which established a free-trade list of non-taxed imports. The Wilson bill attempted to reduce the tariffs imposed by the McKinley tariff bill that was passed in 1890. As a partisan issue, the Democratic Party supported free trade, while Republicans supported import taxes that protected American workers and consumers. The overall core frame of the tariff issue was whether taxes on imports to the United States hurt or helped the American economy. Since the Friend's editor, William Jeltz, had pledged his support to the Republican Party, it was not surprising that the newspaper endorsed the Republican position of protectionism. Thus, the position of the core frame stated that lifting tariffs on imports caused serious harm to the American economy.

Seven signature elements were identified in the protectionism framing package (see Appendix B for signature matrixes). The package appealed to the principle of Republican Party loyalty. The destruction of protectionism was depicted as unconstitutional because it violated the will of the people (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 3). The "humbug bill" was a catchphrase that conveyed the disgruntled attitude shared by Republicans over the passage of the Wilson tariff bill. The consequences of free trade were higher prices for consumer goods and lower wages for workers that in turn deprived consumers of their buying power.

Cutting off wages necessarily cuts off what the people can buy, and thus necessarily reduces business. Now the one fact which everybody can see is that wages are at present very much lower than they were two years ago, before the people voted for a change of tariff. (The People's Friend, Sept. 28, 1894, p. 3) Rooted in greed and self-interest, free-trade supporters were labeled as fanatics from a "gigantic organization of boodlers [sic]" who were looking out only for themselves (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 4).

Large corporations and organizations, such as the Sugar Trust -- a powerful liaison of sugar-producing companies -- were depicted as beneficiaries of a Democratic free-trade conspiracy against other industries. One cartoon showed Democratic President Grover Cleveland's motto as "In Sugar We Trust" (The People's Friend, Sept. 28, 1894, p. 3). On the other hand, average citizens and smaller businesses were identified as the losers. For example, "It is the workingman who pays, in reduced wages, the cost of democratic tariff reform," and "All the trusts were most liberally provided for in the bill, while a tax was upon the sugar of the peodle [sic] and upon the business men and tee [sic] employes [sic] of labor" (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, pp. 3, 4). "The price of foreign wool imports is now so low that without protective duties American wool growers cannot successfully compete with them" (The People's Friend, Sept. 14, 1894, p. 3).

The consequences of the tariff were not limited to the national economy. Ramifications were identified beyond the US's national borders. For example, the import taxes on sugar affected Cuban planters, who were expected to retaliate with increased duties on American exports (The People's Friend, Sept. 21, 1894, p. 2).

Several metaphors were used by the Friend to construct the interpretive package for the tariff issue. A tree-planting metaphor illustrated the projected outcome of the tariff bill.

> Alas, for the death of a barren hobby reared by Democratic husbandry but blasted by the hot waves of pubic opinion. Let our modern thinkers take warning and govern themselves accordingly. The sapling, Mr. Wilson's bill, does not resemble the original trunk to an alarming extent and it was better for the people that the tree of Protection had been let alone as planted by Farmer McKinley (The People's Friend, Sept. 21, 1894, p. 1).

A second metaphor characterized the tariff bill as the cause of certain death for the Democratic Party. In a political graveyard, donkey hooves were exposed from a grave located near the tombstone of the old Whig Party (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 3).

Civil Rights

Most weeks, the Friend addressed the civil rights issue. Two interpretive packages were used to frame the different dimensions of this issue: social injustice and the "Negro problem" -- a catchphrase used by both newspapers to designate prejudicial attitudes (see Appendix B for signature matrixes). Using two frames for the civil rights issue enabled Editor Jeltz to distinguish between attitudes and behaviors that violated the principle of equality for all races. The Negro problem frame focused on racial prejudice, and the frame of social injustice was used to identify acts of discrimination, although neither distinction was explicitly stated in the Friend.

Negro problem package. According to the Friend, the origin of "all our race trouble is fanaticism prejudice" (Aug. 31, 1894, p. 4). While prejudice was traced to the era of slavery, the Populist and Democratic parties were depicted as contributors to the problem (The People's Friend, July 13, 1894, p. 1; Aug. 17, 1894, p. 1; Sept. 7, 1894, p. 1). One metaphor used by the Friend in the Negro problem frame was the "mountain of prejudice" that prevented people from being viewed as equal citizens (The People's Friend, June 22, 1894, p. 1).

Two exemplars of the Negro problem frame reported in the Friend were speeches by White politicians who had used language that demeaned blacks.

> There are some men of the [John J.] Ingalls stripe further west who show their contempt for the Negro in congressional speeches and votes...let every Negro in Kansas cast a stone on his [Ingall's] grave that he may be so heavily weighted as to make his resurrection impossible. It is not enough to withold [sic] their support from him, but it is our duty to fight him. (The People's Friend, Sept. 7, 1894, p. 4)

and,

> At the Democratic rally, held at Pertile Springs, Mo. September six, among the noted speakers of the party on this occasion, was David Overmyer, of Kansas the Democratic nominee for Gov. In the course of his remarks said,
> "Out side [sic] of the Negro, whose ingnorant [sic] voice should not be heard in this Government so far as legislation and voting are concerned, the Democratic party out numbers [sic] all parties and surpases [sic] all in intelligence, might and dignity"....no colored man that has even average common sense pride and dignity for himself and race, but what will hurl the insult in his [Overmyer] face and resent the same at the polls. (The People' Friend, Sept. 14, 1894, p. 1)

Social injustice package. The core position for the social injustice frame stated that, even more than 25 years after the Civil War, Black Americans were treated unjustly. This framing package appealed to the principle that the color of a person's skin should not be the determining factor whether someone in the United States experiences the rights of full citizenship. The Friend depicted people as "honorable as the white man and his equal in every respect" (The People's Friend, Sept. 14, 1894, p. 4).

Comparison of Issues and Frames between the Black and General-Circulation Papers

Specific issue comparisons between the Black and general circulation newspapers revealed that the frames for the more prominent issues, such as the tariff and government corruption, were similar. For other issues, such as labor and lynching, the frames were different.

Tariff on US Imports

The tariff was the most prominent issue in both the Friend and the Star. Taking the Republican position, the newspapers used the protectionism package to frame the tariff issue. The Star wrote, "The new tariff bill is not worth the effort required to frame and pass it" (Sept. 1, 1894, p. 4). Both the Friend and the Star continued the debate over the impact of this legislation on the national economy by focusing on the short and long-term effects of the tariff on the price of consumer goods, unemployment, and wage earnings.

Government Corruption

Another prominent issue in the Friend and the Star was the mismanagement of government on the state level by the incumbent Populists. Certain news events injected this issue into the public forum. Lorenzo Lewelling, a Populist, was the incumbent in a heated contest for Kansas governor. The emasculation of several inmates at the Imbecile Asylum in Winfield and the use of rail passes by Governor Lewelling's administration were cited as evidence of the Populists' mismanagement of political power and resources on the state level.

> Taking out your knife and whetting it on your boot indicates that you are a Populist employe [sic] at the Winfield Imbecile asylum. Showing a card with the word "reform" printed in large letters while you slowly wink the other eye indicates that you have a job in the statehouse (The Kansas Star, Sept. 1, 1894, p. 1)

While this event was not reported in the Friend, the only made general references to Populist indiscretions.

> Some of our Colored voters have been almost persuaded to think a change of party was necessary, but the present condition of the country; its state and national administration, convinces us that there never was a better show for the success of the straight Republican ticket than is now presented. (The People's Friend, Sept. 28, 1894, p. 1)

Labor

Labor, an economic issue that was closely related to the tariff, also was a prominent issue in the Friend and the Star. Accounts of labor strikes by railroad and coal workers, in particular, were frequent news events reported by the newspapers. The strikes could be viewed from both a negative or positive perspective, depending on underlying principles of the interpretative package of the labor issue. Two interpretative packages framed the labor issue: One focused on the benefits for striking workers and the other focused on strikes providing an opportunity for the employment of blacks.

Benefit strikers. The Star primarily framed the labor strikes as a method utilized to benefit the union workers. Though the violence was denounced by the Star, generally the strikes were endorsed by the Star as a method to improve working conditions. That the trains have been forcibly stopped and destroyed is inexcusable... [yet] if the railroads had been managed honestly, with due regard to the rights of other people, there would have been no strike." (The Kansas Star, Sept. 22, 1894, p. 1).

Open jobs. On the other hand, the core position of the frame used primarily by the Friend promoted the positive impact that strikes had for Americans. For example, while the costly and damaging economic effects of the rail strike were noted by the Friend, the interpretative package that framed the labor issue appealed to the principle that Blacks deserved the same economic opportunities as Whites. Implicit in the Friend's coverage was that Black Americans had difficulty securing permanent employment, and the strikes were viewed as one way to improve the employment situation for Blacks. The rail strike was said to open jobs for Blacks that had been unattainable. "Since the great Debs strike, the U.P. railroad employs colored people in its yards as switchmen, carcleaners and roundhouse men. If Debs will order another strike, we will advance another notch" (The People's Friend, Sept. 14, 1894, p. 4).

An underlying principle of the Friend's labor frame was that the work of men was no less valuable than that of their White counterparts. This, argued Editor Jeltz, was evidence that Black men should be admitted into the labor unions. "Labor organizations need no longer attempt to debar Negro employes [sic] from their organizations because it is a demonstrative fact that he is coming well prepared in all lines sufficient for the task" (The People's Friend, Sept. 1[illegible], 1894, p.4).

Not only were labor unions closed to membership, but inventions such as the cotton gin and a cotton-picking machine replaced the manual labor of workers (The People's Friend, Aug.

31, 1894, p. 1). While union workers boycotted their employers because of inadequate wages or working conditions, Editor Jeltz argued that those in management were not necessarily corrupt. It was a worthy goal to seek management positions. He appealed to the principle that sound character and hard work would result in economic success and justice.

> ...The growth of capital carries with it a certain influence for good to society; and there is attached to it at the same time a condition of inevitable redistribution when it assumes the form of large personal estates. Fate always provides shiftless sons or grandsons to scatter wealth, and it goes back to where it came from, in the interest of the whole population. There are only three generations from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in this country [sic], in this country [sic], it has been well observed; and that is an assurance which ought to silence all fears of peril to the republic from the architects of big fortunes. (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 4)

Lynching

Both newspapers gave attention to the lynching issue, but the Friend interpreted the issue differently than the Star.

Mob law. The Friend framed lynching with the "mob law" interpretative package. This frame depicted lynching as a Southern custom that was a great evil. The frame appealed to the principle that courts should determine guilt. For example, the Friend stated that everyone accused of a crime had certain rights, "no matter their color or pedigree" (The People's Friend, Sept. 21, 1894, p. 1). One metaphor regarded lynching "as inevitable as rain" (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 1).

A particularly tragic lynching incident in Tennessee was reported in both newspapers in early September. Six Black men, accused of barn burning, were killed by a mob of 50 men who had been led by several law-enforcement officers. The Friend depicted the murdered men as "innocent colored men" and "alleged negro incendiaries" -- family men whose deaths were grieved by wives and children (The People's Friend, Sept. 7, 1894, p. 4; Sept. 21, 1894, p. 1).

Brutality. The Star framed lynching as brutal, but did dealt with consequences of the crime. While the Star first reported the lynching incident as "alleged negro incendiaries" on one page, on another page the incident was referred to as led by "white ruffians who murdered in a cold-blooded horrible manner six helpless negroes who were under arrest" (The Kansas Star, Sept. 8, 1894, pp. 2, 4). A commentary followed that stated, "few equals of barbarity [are present] in our country" (The Kansas Star, Sept. 8, 1894, p. 4).

The Friend and the Star praised the prompt action that followed in which the mob members in Tennessee were indicted for murder. Both newspapers used distinctive terminology to designate lynching incidents. The term "lynching" was used frequently in the Friend, whether it related to specific incidents or to the anti-lynching campaign of Ida B. Wells, an activist who promoted legislation to curtail lynching. Yet, the word "lynching" was not used when the Tennessee story was first reported in the Star.

Implications

Overall Comparisons

During May 24 to Sept. 29, 1894, the majority of political issues that appeared the mainstream press of Wichita were also present in the city's Black press. The issues of federal spending, civil service reform, agriculture prices, and veterans' pension were present in the Star, but not the Friend. On the other hand, the Friend covered race issues that were not addressed by the mainstream newspaper. The core positions of the frames for race-related issues lynching addressed the problems of racial inequality and injustice. The packages also promoted possible solutions to the problem, whether through assimilation into the larger society or emigration.

An examination of the Friend reveals that the issues covered in the paper was not limited to issues that primarily concerned Black Wichitans. The tariff and labor issues that focused on economic interests were the most prominent in the Friend and the Star. The planks of the party platforms provided a framework for the public debate of numerous political issues. The Friend shared some of the same dominant issues as its general press counterpart, the Star, including the tariff, labor, government mismanagement, and Republican rhetoric. As Republican papers, the Friend and the Star endorsed protectionism and condemned the Populist state administration.

The Friend and the Star often used "Republicanism" to frame its political issues. This rhetoric promoted the innate goodness of Republican candidates and the imminent victory of the GOP in November. According to the Friend, the party deserved the Black man's vote because "Republican principles are immutable" (The People's Friend, Aug. 31, 1894, p. 3). One metaphor used by the Friend depicted the life-saving aspects of the party:

> The republican [sic] party has been the deck and all else the sea. The republican party made us a contraband and gave us a shovel and told us to dig the grave of slavery...Stand by the party that stood by you. (The People's Friend, Sept. 7, 1894, p. 1)

This example reflects the partisan rhetoric that was typical of newspapers published during the 19th century.

Even though the newspapers focused on many of the same issues, some were not framed in the same way. While the frames for the tariff and government mismanagement were similar, the Friend framed the labor issue differently than the Star. The core position for framing the labor issue in the Friend focused on its effect on Black Americans. The Star addressed only one issue of racial concern--lynching. Though the term "lynching" was not initially used by the Star, the newspaper framed the issue similarly to the newspapers, with an emphasis on the illegality and injustice of the acts.

Typically, the positions advocated by the Friend and the Star tended to follow party lines. The mission statement of the individual newspapers served as one factor that influenced both the kinds of political issues addressed and how those issues were framed in the newspapers. The Friend explicitly identified itself as a newspaper that published information of particular concern to the Black citizens of Wichita; yet, the Friend also acknowledged its political association with the Republican party. "In politics we are Republicans... Wichita will have what she deserves, a good Negro Newspaper--published in the interest of the Race" (The People's Friend, May 31, 1894, p. 4). News sources was a second factor that affected the choice of events that the paper printed. On numerous occasions, the same stories were found in more than one newspaper, particularly on pages that were not locally generated. This also accounts, in part, for the prominence of the tariff and the labor issues, though coverage in the papers was not limited to those pages.

Both similarities and differences were found in the presentation and framing of political issues by the press and the general press of Wichita in the mid-1890s. Political ideology and race affected the presentation and framing of political issues.

DISCUSSION

Both similarities and differences existed in the presentation and framing of political issues in the Black and general press of Wichita in the mid-1890s. Over a period of four months, from May 24 to Sept. 29, 1894, the Black press of Wichita addressed many of the same issues found in the mainstream press, though in varying amounts of coverage and degrees of editorial support. During an 18-week period, the dominant issues covered in the Black and mainstream press included the tariff on imports to the United States, labor, and civil rights. Though mentioned in both newspapers, the issues of prohibition, monopolies and political party fusion received less emphasis in the newspapers than the mainstream paper.

In addition to the coverage of partisan issues, the Black newspaper addressed concerns that were ignored or overlooked by the general press, particularly the civil rights and social mobility issues that concerned Wichita's citizens. One can deduce that the four main issues -- civil rights, the social mobility of the Black race, lynching, and the emigration of blacks -- were of particular concern to Wichita's Black citizens in 1894.

The interpretative package model was useful in explicating the frames of political issues found in 19th-century newspapers. Most of the signature elements were applicable, except for visual images. Only a few political cartoons, limited to the Friend, were found in this study. Though the model has been used primarily to analyze present-day media that value objectivity, it also is useful in analyzing political issues of the partisan press era.

The findings of this research are significant for several reasons. First, while these results confirm past research of the Black press that identified its racial advocacy role, this research adds to that knowledge by examining that role influenced the presentation of particular political issues, such as the labor issue. It also revealed how political ideology influenced other issues, such as the tariff and government corruption. Second, previous research on the Black press has also focused on the role of the press as an alternative voice. Use of the signature matrix provided a more valid and reliable method of looking at the way late-19th century journalists actually presented the issues, identifying how common issues were framed differently. Therefore, this research points to the beneficial use of interpretive framing packages. Third, most depictions of the Black press do not mention similarities shared with the general press. This research makes evident that the Black press was not totally in conflict with the white press. Some issues, such as the tariff were presented in approximately the same way.

The interpretative framing package model identified core frames and signature elements, providing clear direction in isolating similarities and differences in the presentation of the issues. This is advantageous because communication researchers are able to compare how issues and underlying themes change or remain stable across time. Yet, the small number of extant copies of the newspapers in this study limits the time frame of analysis and thus provides no more than a snapshot in time. Further research needs to be done to apply this process to the analysis of issues in early ethnic and mainstream newspapers. It would be interesting to compare how frames in early ethnic and mainstream framing compare with modern publications.

This research project has examined the issues of Wichita's political climate during the mid-1890s. Both race and political and religious ideology played key roles in the framing of political issues. Thus, these factors account for both the similarities and differences in the framing of issues by the Black and general circulation press in the late-19th century.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1A

Issues in the Friend and the Star from May 24-Sept. 29, 1894

Newspapers	FRIEND	STAR
ISSUES		
*Lynching	24	8
*Civil Rights	19	--
*Social Mobility for Blacks	13	--
*Back-to-Africa	6	--
Tariff on US imports	97	126
Labor	69	117
Women's Suffrage	15	28
Monetary silver/gold	11	30
Government corruption	10	35
Taxes/income tax	8	16
Monopolies/private ownership	5	13
Prohibition	4	19
Immigration	4	5

Note. Dashes indicate the issue was not found. An asterisk (*) indicates a race-related issues.

Table 1 continued on next page.

Table 1A (continued)

Issues in the Friend and the Star from May 24-Sept. 29, 1894

Newspapers	FRIEND	STAR
ISSUES		
Political party fusion	2	11
Federal government spending	--	9
Civil service reform	--	1
Agricultural prices/irrigation	--	8
Pension for veterans	--	3
Foreign Trade	--	1

Table 2A

Prominent Issues in the Friend and the Star from May 24-Sept. 29, 1894

	Issues	Frequency
Newspapers		
FRIEND	Tariff	97
	Labor	69
	Lynching	24
	Civil Rights	19
STAR	Tariff	126
	Labor	117
	Gov't Corruption	31

APPENDIX B

Chart 1B

Signature Matrix for Tariff Issue: "Protectionism" Package

PROTECTIONISM PACKAGE

CORE FRAME	CORE POSITION	METAPHOR	EXEMPLARS	CATCHPHRASES
The issue is how tariffs affect US economy.	Protectionism benefits industry and people.	Tree of Protection, political cemetery	Tariff inequities	Humbug bill, free-trade conspiracy

DEPICTIONS	ROOTS	CONSEQUENCES	APPEALS TO PRINCIPLE
Free-trade, fanatics, boodlers	Greed, self-interest, incompetence	High prices, low wages	Republican party loyalty

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Chart 2B

Signature Matrixes for Civil Rights Issue: " Negro Problem" and "Social Injustice" Packages

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NEGRO PROBLEM PACKAGE

CORE FRAME	CORE POSITION	METAPHOR	EXEMPLARS	CATCHPHRASES
The issue is how prejudice dehumanizes Blacks.	Blacks deserve respect.	Mountain of prejudice	Racial slurs	Colorphobia

DEPICTIONS	ROOTS	CONSEQUENCES	APPEALS TO PRINCIPLE
Blacks are equal.	Slavery	Unequal opportunities	All men are created equal.

SOCIAL INJUSTICE PACKAGE

CORE FRAME	CORE POSITION	METAPHOR	EXEMPLARS	CATCHPHRASES
The issue is how Blacks are victims of discrimination.	Blacks deserve equal treatment and opportunity.		Refusal of serve at drugstore	

DEPICTIONS	ROOTS	CONSEQUENCES	APPEALS TO PRINCIPLE
Blacks treated less than men.	Blacks viewed as second-class citizens	Unemployment, idle young people	Discrimination is unchristian

LEAKS IN THE POOL:
THE PRESS AT THE GULF WAR BATTLE OF KHAFJI

Qualitative Studies Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Washington, D.C., August 1995

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Leaks in the Pool: The Press at the Gulf War Battle of Khafji

An Iraqi military communique described it as "a lightning ground attack" in which "our valiant forces crushed the armies of infidelity." Baghdad Radio called it a "splendid victory over the enemies of God, the enemies of the Arabs and Muslims."[1] General Norman Schwarzkopf dismissed it as "about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant" while the Saudi commander, Lieutenant General Prince Khalid bin Sultan, called it a "suicide mission."[2] The press corps was sceptical. "How come the ground war began in the last days of January with an *Iraqi* attack?" asked *Time* magazine. At briefings in Riyadh, reporters wondered how underfed, lice-ridden Iraqi troops, who had been under aerial bombardment for two weeks, could advance into Saudi Arabia. In a cartoon in *Le Monde*, a soldier shooting at an Iraqi rebukes a television crew. "You were told--the ground war is going to start later!"[3]

Two weeks after the beginning of the Gulf War, the Iraqis launched a series of cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia. Allied air and armored units drove them back, inflicting heavy losses, but for 36 hours the Iraqis held the border town of Khafji. The battle raises fundamental issues in what John MacArthur has called the second front of the Gulf War--the struggle by the coalition to maintain domestic and international support through control of information.[4] It was not, as it turned out, the first battle of the ground war but no one--the allies, the Iraqis or the press--knew that at the time. From a military perspective, it was a defeat for Saddam Hussein. Thirty Iraqis were killed, another 37 wounded and 466 taken prisoner; at least seven tanks and nine armored personnel carriers were destroyed.[5] But it was an Iraqi propaganda coup, celebrated with banner headlines and street demonstrations around the Arab world; after two weeks of intensive aerial bombardment, Iraqi troops had emerged from their bunkers and gone on the attack. Coalition briefers had to explain how the Iraqis had been able to launch an offensive--not just at Khafji, but at three other points along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. The military reputation of the Saudi forces was at stake because Khafji was in their sector of the front. It was important for inter-coalition politics to show that they were a capable military force so, with troops from the Gulf state of Qatar, they were given the leading role in retaking the town. At first, briefers said U.S. Marines provided only air support to the Arab forces. They had to revise their story when pool pictures showed artillery in action; later it emerged that Marines were involved in fighting on the ground. The battle exposed weaknesses in the military information system. Briefers announced that the town had been retaken then quickly had to admit that fighting was still going on; there were conflicting accounts of the size and strength of the Iraqi force, and of the intensity of the fighting. The confusion exacerbated already strained relations between the military command and the press corps. Several print reporters and television crews, frustrated by the military's refusal to provide access to the front, defied the pool system and went out on their own, facing arrest, harassment and opposition from their colleagues in the pools.

The Battle of Khafji: Confusion in the Military and Press Corps

It was not until several days after the fighting ended that the basic elements of the battle became clear. Over a three-day period, from Tuesday, January 29 to Thursday, January 31, Iraqi troops, tanks and armored vehicles crossed the Saudi border at several points between Khafji and Umm Hujul, 50 miles to the west. It was not known whether these were probing attacks, designed to discover the disposition of allied forces, or the start of a full-scale Iraqi offensive.[6] By the weekend, it became clear that the attack on Khafji was merely part of a larger operation. Along the entire Saudi-Kuwaiti border, Iraqi forces had been testing the strength of the coalition's defenses. Field commanders reported that a force of Iraqi troops, initially estimated at 60,000, was massing at Al-Wafra, 37 miles to the west of Khafji, and allied planes bombed armored brigades and supply columns moving south.[7] As Philip Taylor notes, the major confrontation at Wafra was "the 'hidden' battle, fought ferociously but far away from the television cameras which were focusing on the comparatively small skirmish at Al-Khafji."[8]

In military terms, the battle for Khafji was, indeed, comparatively small, but in information terms it took on a larger significance. Here for the first time, Iraqi ground forces were engaged with allied troops. It was essential for the coalition to achieve a quick, decisive victory with minimal casualties. The allied commanders had always maintained they would launch the ground war when they were good and ready to do so; it was important to regain the initiative and, perhaps, preempt a wider ground offensive. "There was some embarassment," noted BSkyB News correspondent Aernout Van Lynden. "The American commanders have kept on saying to us that they were not caught off guard ... but they haven't been able to explain how such a large number of Iraqis were able to get into Khafji."[9] In fact, the initial force which took the town on the night of January 29 was fairly small--a battalion of between 400 and 800 men with about 45 vehicles--although the Iraqis sent in more troops and armor the next day. Nonetheless, the military had to explain why the Iraqis were able to enter and take the town with so little resistance.

R'as al-Khafji, seven miles south of the Kuwaiti border, was "an unpretty border town with a small port, an oil refinery, and the misfortune of lying within range of Iraqi field guns in southeastern Kuwait."[10] The Iraqis had shelled the town on the first day of the war, January 17, forcing its 15,000 inhabitants to flee. The allies had observation posts in the area but the main force--the 1st Marine Division's Task Force Taro and Arab troops--was at Al-Mishab, 30 miles to the south and out of artillery range. Since the beginning of the war, there had been sporadic clashes across the no man's land of barbed wire and minefields. On January 29, U.S. surveillance teams noted increased movement across the border, including the repositioning of tanks and armored personnel carriers. The Iraqis had assembled several battalions in the so-called Wafra Forest, an area of fields and orchards 25 miles west of the Gulf, and at 8:30 p.m. an American observer spotted the lead platoons emerging from the trees. Within 15 minutes, he counted nearly a hundred vehicles in column on the road paralleling the border. The Marines tried to call in an air strike, but all available pilots had been diverted further west where another Iraqi force was attempting to break through. The Marines and Saudi border troops and national guardsmen fell back to Khafji. From a water tower, Marine observers watched Iraqi T-55 tanks and armored personnel carriers cross the causeway leading into the town. When the Iraqis began spraying rooftops and upper windows with machine gun fire to suppress snipers, the Marines raced south out of the town. However, two six-man Marine reconnaissance teams were cut off by the Iraqi advance. One had been in Khafji nearly a week, watching for infiltrators and providing early warning of Iraqi Scud and rocket attacks. With their vehicles concealed and a machine gun in place over the compound gate, they opted to stay and hope the Iraqis did not discover them.[11] The two Marine teams were ideally placed to direct air and artillery strikes and were to play a crucial role in the allied counteroffensive.[12]

The presence of the Marine observers was not revealed at the time--rightly so, because to do so would have put their lives in danger and deprived the allies of their eyes and ears in Khafji. However, the military command, although aware that the Iraqis had occupied Khafji, was saying nothing. Indeed, the first news of the attack came not from Riyadh or Washington but from Baghdad--a report from the French news agency, Agence France Presse, on Wednesday, January 30, quoting an Iraqi military communique which announced that a "massive land offensive has been launched against Al-Khafji." CNN attempted to confirm the French report, but over the next few hours the situation remained confused. Shortly after 14:00 CNN quoted Baghdad Radio's claim that Iraqi troops had moved 12 miles into "the kingdom of evil of Saudi Arabia," occupying Khafji.[13] At a hurriedly called briefing in Riyadh, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Gallagher would say only that clashes had occurred at three places along the border the previous night, and that "contact was broken off" early in the morning. The Iraqis, he said, had suffered heavy losses. He gave no indication that fighting was continuing and did not mention Khafji.[14]

Even as Gallagher was making his announcement, it was contradicted by pool reports which revealed that "contact" was far from over. This was the first indication that the information machine was beginning to falter under the pressure of fast-moving events on the ground. There was as yet no video from Khafji--CNN, Britain's BSkyB News and the American networks were still showing stock footage of the town shot earlier in the week--but newspaper pool reporters were filing copy. These reports, which would have been cleared by the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran, were at odds with its own official position. In Riyadh, CNN's Rick Sallinger said: "We were told by the U.S. Central Command here a short time ago that the ground fighting had stopped as of three o'clock this morning. However reports from the scene paint a quite different picture. We understand that the fighting goes on ... with perhaps several thousand Iraqi troops still in the area." CNN's Charles Jaco, in a live report from Dhahran, quoted a Gannett News Service pool report in which the Marines claimed to have destroyed 20 Iraqi T-55 tanks in fighting along the border; at least eight men had been killed and two armored personnel carriers destroyed in what Marine Lieutenant Colonel Cliff Myers called "hellacious" fighting. The Iraqis were still in control of Khafji, but Saudi and Qatari forces were counterattacking, with artillery support from the Marines who had established blocking positions south of the town. Although the pool report had been filed several hours earlier, it indicated that the fighting was more intense and prolonged than Gallagher was saying.[15] Saudi and U.S. officials, said Jaco, "really aren't sure what the situation is up there. Obviously, somebody knows but they're not talking right now." Indeed, there wasn't much at all he could say about military matters. When a burst of engine noise interrupted his live report, he wryly remarked: "Now behind me you hear a jet of some sort taking off--or landing--I'm not allowed to say which."[16]

Military Defeat or Propaganda Victory?

The reluctance to admit that fighting was still going on--let alone that the Iraqis had occupied Khafji--gave the initial propaganda advantage to Baghdad. For Saddam Hussein, it was important to convince sympathetic and neutral Arab governments and their peoples that, despite two weeks of air bombardment, Iraq's military strength and will to fight were undiminished. The border attacks showed that the Iraqi army could come out of its deep defenses and engage the coalition forces on the ground. Baghdad Radio reported that Saddam Hussein had travelled to the front to meet his field commanders and had personally planned the advance which it heralded as the start of "the long awaited ground offensive." Iraq's Ba'ath party newspaper called the attack on Khafji the prelude to a greater battle, "the sign of a thunderous storm blowing over the Arabian desert," and a military communique claimed that "the corpses of American soldiers are littering the battlefield."[17] The news was greeted with rejoicing and demonstrations in the Arab and Muslim world. In a rally called by the pro-Iraqi Islamic Front in Algeria, 60,000 people marched in the rain shouting "Victory to Islam and the Muslims."[18] In Jordan, 3,000 people took to the streets shouting support for the Iraqi offensive; in Yemen, demonstrators fired on the residences of the American, Japanese and Turkish ambassadors; the Pakistani press claimed that Iraq had won a major land battle against allied forces. Coalition member Egypt, with 45,000 troops in the Gulf, kept its universities closed to avoid protests.[19]

The Western media was not slow to grasp that what appeared to be folly on the military front made sense on the propaganda front. While military commanders "have a tendency to dismiss political goals in war, viewing them as distractions from the serious business of combat," noted the New York Times, the Iraqi President "has other goals, mostly political and politico-military, and they were very well served by his troops' success in pushing into Khafji and hanging onto it for a day." Time agreed: "Saddam Hussein may have figured it right if he was calculating that he could win on the Arab street even while losing in the skies and the sands of the desert. Each day that the allies throw their best punches at him and leave him standing, Saddam's prestige among ordinary Arabs grows." French television correspondent Jean-Luc Mano in Riyadh said the Iraqis hoped to "score some spectacular hits that would give them the opportunity to claim victory, even if they were ephemeral." The Times, quoting Arab analysts, said the episode "could win Saddam a place in Arab folk legend," and noted in an editorial: "The Iraqi attack on Khafji, militarily doomed as Saddam Hussein knew it must be, well illustrates the difficulties of a land war against a dictator for whom the desired mix of political and military outcomes is so different from that of the allies. What mattered to Saddam about this first ground battle was not how it ended, but how it would seem to the world."[20] On CNN, military analyst Richard Jupa noted: "Remember, Saddam is playing hero-victim to the Arab peoples ... I do think this is a sacrifice of major proportions [but] it is not necessarily viewed in the Arab world the same way it is to Western audiences." BBC Defense Correspondent David Shukman said that by capturing Khafji, if only temporarily, Saddam Hussein gained a "political advantage, giving his supporters an image of resistance."[21]

Many Arabs regarded the Gulf War as an imperialist venture in which Western powers sought to restore their influence in the

Middle East by defeating a nationalist Arab power. Poorer Arab countries resented the wealth and power of Saudi Arabia and the oil-rich Gulf states; these countries had turned against Iraq after supporting and financing Saddam Hussein's eight-year war with Iran. The coalition's claims of a just war to restore the legitimate government of Kuwait were often viewed as hypocritical; if the occupation of Kuwait was unjust, what about the long-standing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian homeland? Islamic fundamentalists were deeply troubled that "fraternal" Muslim countries were at war, and to some the presence of foreign troops on Saudi soil was intolerable. Saudi Arabia's rulers had betrayed their trust as the guardians and protectors of the holy sites of Islam, putting money and power before religion.[22] "The infidels must leave before they become food for birds and corpses blown by the desert wind," declared Baghdad Radio. Iraqi communiques were often couched in religious terms, portraying the offensive as part of a jihad or holy war.

> The long awaited ground offensive has been launched, raising high the banner of Allahu Akbar [God is Great.] In their advance the Iraqi forces have crushed the forces of apostasy, forcing many to flee, cursing blasphemy and blasphemers. Our forces have penetrated about 20 kilometres along the front line into the enemy's land and the evil kingdom of Saudi Arabia. ... The Almighty bestowed upon the believers an astounding victory when the blasphemy camp collapsed. People of Saudi Kingdom, people of Haj and Hejaz ... we are your brothers and you are ours. Both of us stand unified now against blasphemers, crime and corruption perpetrated by Bush, King Fahd and their collaborators.[23]

This communique, quoted by CNN's Peter Arnett, reported that Iraqi troops had entered Khafji around midnight on January 29. From a propaganda perspective, the timing was fortuitous because CNN had installed a portable satellite uplink earlier in the day and had begun transmitting live pictures from Baghdad. The communiques and pool reports indicated that there was more to the Iraqi offensive than the allies were saying. Not until 15:30, more than two hours after the initial French report, did the coalition acknowledge that fighting had been going on around Khafji. The announcement came at the Saudi military briefing by Colonel Ahmed Al-Robayan who said that "a small mechanized Iraqi unit" had attacked the town the previous night. How small, one reporter asked, referring to reports that the Iraqi force numbered 1,000 or more. "I have no unit size available," replied Al-Robayan. The colonel refused to discuss other Iraqi incursions along the border, adding enigmatically that "if there is any other activity, it would have been an ongoing operation that I cannot talk about." The Iraqis, he said, had suffered heavy casualties and 21 prisoners of war had been taken; allied casualties were light. Al-Robayan said that the "situation is under control," although he refused to disclose whether Iraqi troops were still in the town.[24] The briefing, in which the colonel also reviewed air sorties and naval action, lasted just seven minutes, leaving most of the reporters not much wiser than before. Perhaps some of them complained, because within half an hour the U.S. Central Command held an unscheduled briefing in which Lieutenant Colonel Greg Pepin reported four Iraqi cross-border incursions. He said three had been repelled but that "latest reports indicate that Saudi forces are engaged [with] an Iraqi mechanized battalion in the vicinity of R'as Al-Khafji."[25]

One reason for the tension over Khafji was the fact that the media considered it more important than the military did. "It all depends on which lens you look through," wrote R.W. Apple. "The battle of Khafji ... was an insignificant Iraqi incursion easily thrown back, or a demonstration of Arab prowess in battle, or evidence that the initiative now lies with Baghdad, or a warning that grim combat and heavy casualties lie ahead for American ground troops here."[26] To the press, it was the first ground battle of the war; the Iraqis had advanced into Saudi territory, captured a town and, although reports were conflicting, could still be holding it. Coalition commanders saw it as a desperate gamble by Saddam Hussein to gain a propaganda advantage, and said it was doomed to failure. By emerging from fortified bunkers in southern Kuwait, the Iraqis were simply exposing themselves to aerial bombardment; in military terms, they had everything to lose by coming out into the open.[27] In Riyadh, commanders "competed to see who could be most dismissive of the battle." Schwarzkopf called the fighting at Khafji "about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant." General Sir Peter de la Billiere, joint commander of the British forces, described it as "a clear military disaster" for the Iraqis. The American Air Force chief, Lieutenant General Charles Horner, belittled Saddam Hussein's probe as "the stupidest thing he could do." American briefer Brigadier General Patrick Stevens IV, who had vigorously denied that the fighting was a major engagement, now called Khafji "a major Iraqi defeat." The reversal, noted the New York Times, was "not isolated." American spokesmen, including Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly, operations director for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had cited Iraq's "failure to cross the Saudi border as evidence of Mr. Hussein's weakness." Now the military was saying that the cross-border incursions showed that the Iraqis were desperate.[28] This shift in perspective helped to downplay the importance of Khafji. Indeed, of the four cross-border incursions, this was perhaps the least significant; more Iraqi troops and armor had been engaged at other points. Moreover, Khafji had no strategic importance; it was an abandoned town with no troops, supplies or military targets. Yet, partly because the military kept reporters away from the other engagements, partly because Khafji was a town and not simply an area of desert, the battle held the media's attention and dominated the briefings for three days.

The allied commander-in-chief had other priorities. At his nightly briefing on January 30, Schwarzkopf attempted to put the battle for Khafji in its proper place. It was the end of the second week of the war and the general, with a dazzling array of charts and videos, reeled off the list of allied accomplishments. He reported that coalition aircraft had flown over 30,000 sorties and established air supremacy,[29] and recounted efforts to cut supply lines to Kuwait by bombing bridges in southern Iraq, attacks on nuclear, chemical and biological facilities and SCUD launchers, and the destruction of tanks and artillery. Only towards the end of his 30-minute briefing did he discuss the cross-border incursions. Schwarzkopf said air strikes against the Iraqi columns had been effective with pilots reporting "rather sensational losses"--the destruction of 41 tanks, seven armored personnel carriers, four artillery and six bunker positions. The Marines had suffered casualties too--12 killed, two wounded and two light armored vehicles destroyed. Schwarzkopf conceded that the Iraqis had moved into Khafji but was quick to dismiss the town as a strategic objective. It had been "abandoned and deserted since the first day of Desert Storm," and Arab troops were moving in to expel the Iraqis.[30]

From Schwarzkopf's standpoint, the news of the day was that the coalition had gained air supremacy and was cutting off supplies to Iraqi troops in Kuwait. On another day, the fact that Americans had been killed would have dominated the briefing; interestingly, there were no questions about where and how they died. Clearly, the allies regarded the cross-border incursions as a sideshow; by placing them towards the end of the briefing--between recaps of naval operations and attacks on SCUD sites--Schwarzkopf was simply placing them in their proper perspective. However, the press had a different agenda. One reporter wondered how Iraqi troops, under bombardment by B-52s and short on food and supplies, could make it 12 miles into Saudi territory. "12 miles, six miles, it's irrelevant how far it is," replied Schwarzkopf, a little testily. He went on to say that the Saudis had abandoned Khafji early in the war because it was within range of Iraqi artillery. "I wouldn't really say that the Iraqis had seized Khafji," he said. "You know, when you walk into an uninhabited place, it's not really much of a seizure." In contrast to earlier claims that the situation was under control, he added: "I would tell you I don't think that battle is over by a long shot. I expect a lot more fighting will probably occur tonight."[31] In downplaying the significance of the Iraqi occupation of Khafji, Schwarzkopf sought not only to allay concerns about the allied readinness to repel ground attacks, but to undercut Iraqi claims of an "astounding victory" which were gaining attention throughout the Arab world:

> I've already heard that it's being touted as a major military victory on the battlefield. You know, moving into an unoccupied village six miles inside the friendly lines when there's nobody there, I don't consider that a major military victory. However, if they want to consider it one, that's fine. It's just one battle, it's not the war.[32]

That position was echoed by other military briefers. Stevens described the attack as a "reconnaissance in force" to probe coalition border defenses. "The action," he said, "has been described in certain news reports as a major invasion. It certainly was nothing of the sort." At a Pentagon briefing, Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly was blunter. "They drove down the road to an empty town, and said they took it. ... Their goal might have been an internal morale goal--to say that we went into Saudi Arabia and were there for a period of time. What they achieved was pretty shabby--they didn't stay any time at all [and] they got kicked right back across the border."[33]

The military command had a point. Apart from the Marine observers and some Saudi border guards, Khafji was deserted and undefended, with the main forces to the south at Al-Mishab. However, even if, as Schwarzkopf insisted, the allies were not taken by surprise, it was proving difficult to dislodge the Iraqis. The tenacity of the resistance dented the confidence of those in the military and the media who believed that constant aerial bombardment and lack of supplies had sapped the Iraqi army's will to fight. According to The Times, when news of the capture of Khafji began to filter through, many Americans at the information bureau in Dhahran "were visibly taken aback." One officer, after hearing of two failed attempts to recapture the town, said: "This is a complicated battle. I'm afraid that we are not doing as well as we should have been doing."[34] As a French observer cynically remarked: "I thought these Iraqi troops were all supposed to be starving, lice-ridden and longing only to surrender. If that is the case, I hope the allies do not come up against any in proper shape." The allied commanders now warned against underestimating the Iraqi army; the attacks, said Schwarzkopf, indicated that "they certainly have a lot of fight left in them."[35]

About 15 minutes before Schwarzkopf began his briefing, the first pool video came in via satellite with CNN Defense Correspondent Wolf Blitzer delivering a live voice-over. Marine artillery was shown firing rounds into Khafji, and Blitzer pointed out that the elevation of the guns indicated that they were at some distance from the town. The long range may not have been a disadvantage because the Marine observers hidden in Khafji were using their radios to direct artillery fire. The video, taken some 10 hours earlier, had apparently not been edited because the Marines, struggling to unload shells from trucks, used some appropriate expletives. The pool reporter was interviewing a battery sergeant who said his men were "pretty motivated" and "looking forward to shooting these rounds," when an officer interrupted. "Hey, lookee here, we've got two unidentified vehicles up there on the front. You keep an eye on what the fuck's going on." And, turning to the camera, "Can you do this later, please?"[36]

Although this was the first ground action of the war, air power performed a crucial role. Marine aircraft flew 350 sorties in support of the forces at Khafji, and American B-52 bombers, British and French Jaguars and Marine Harrier jets bombarded Iraqi armored columns at other points along the Saudi border. Initial reports by field commanders on January 31 indicated that some 60,000 Iraqi troops were massing near Wafra, and the commander of a Marine Harrier squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Dick White, said between 800 and 1,000 Iraqi vehicles had been seen moving south towards the border. "There is no sign of the Iraqis retreating," added White, who said he anticipated a "turkey shoot."[37] By the next day, allied officials had drastically revised their estimate; the Iraqi force was now said to number about 8,000. However, there is no doubt the Iraqis suffered heavy losses under almost continual air bombardment. Simon Clifford, a pool reporter with the British Fourth Armored Brigade, said he watched all day as B-52s pounded a 10-mile long Iraqi column, and quoted intelligence reports that 100 tanks had been destroyed. Despite clouds and some fog, allied pilots flew 2,600 sorties.[38] "There were so many aircraft out there," said a Marine officer who watched as planes attacked the Iraqis, "that it was like standing on the median of an interstate." Pilots told a similar story. Back from a bombing mission, Lieutenant Colonel White said laconically: "I would certainly not want to be an Iraqi troop [sic] out there. Aircraft are swarming over that battlefield like gnats. ... I think my biggest danger up there today was running into another American aircraft delivering ordnance on target."[39] The Iraqi decision to leave fortified positions created "such an array of vulnerable targets for American pilots that some on short-range attack missions are hardly able to believe their luck," wrote Christopher Walker in The Times. White called it a "golden opportunity" but said he was puzzled by what seemed to be an almost suicidal switch in Iraqi tactics. "[I]t is almost like you flipped on the light in the kitchen late at night and the cockroaches start scurrying and we are killing them," he said. "It is exactly what we have been looking for and it looks to me like Saddam has lost his marbles."[40]

The Official Line: An Arab Coalition Victory

The precise role of American forces in the battle for Khafji may never be known, but it was certainly greater than the allies were ready to admit. The attempt to portray the recapture of Khafji as a victory for coalition Arab forces and to downplay the American contribution had three objectives: to shore up inter-coalition politics, to boost the morale of the Arab troops, and to demonstrate the resolve and unity of the coalition to the Arab world. Khafji lay within the eastern sector of the front controlled by Arab forces. Saddam Hussein "clearly wanted to test the mettle" of these forces. "If he could rout them, sending them fleeing from the area," said The Times, "he could have claimed it was proof that the real war was between Iraq and the United States, not a coalition of Western and Arab nations."[41] Although Khafji was deserted, the Iraqi occupation was an embarassment to the Saudi High Command. As Aernout Van Lynden of BSkyB News put it: "It was the Saudi and Qatari forces who were defending this town, true only with their lightly armed forces, but it's not been explained why the Iraqis were able to get in quite as easy [sic] as they did."[42] As a partial explanation, the Saudis came up with a story of Iraqi deception. Iraqi tanks had approached their positions with their turrets pointing backwards and the drivers raising their hands in the air in a sign of surrender. When Saudi soldiers went forward to greet them, they shot at them and turned their turrets to open fire on the town, forcing the Arabs to abandon their positions.[43] The Saudi and Qatari forces should have the honor of avenging the treachery and retaking the town; if the Marines led the counter-offensive, it would give the impression that either the Arab troops did not want to fight--or that the allied commanders would not let them. Indeed, there were real, if never publicly voiced, doubts about the capability of these troops. "Many Americans," writes Atkinson, "suspected the Saudis incapable of serious fighting, much less ousting the Iraqi army from a occupied town; Saudi soldiers were viewed ... as indolent, barefoot tea drinkers relying on the Marines for protection."[44] That view was to be put to the test, as Saudi and Qatari troops were given the most visible role in the operation.

There are differing assessments of how well the Arab forces performed against an estimated force of 600 Iraqis. On Wednesday evening, several armored companies of Saudis and Qataris with Marine support tried to move up the main north-south road in a probing mission to determine the strength and disposition of the Iraqis. According to Atkinson, the operation "had all the finesse of a cavalry charge. The Arab troops careered through the streets of southern Khafji for several hours, shooting at enemies, real and imagined, as well as at one another." The Iraqis fired back "with equal indiscrimination," and the allied force withdrew just after midnight. At least one allied light armored vehicle was set on fire.[45] The Arab forces regrouped. Two Qatari tank companies moved north to block Iraqi reinforcements; with the Marines in the town acting as spotters, allied forces attacked Iraqi positions with heavy artillery, Cobra helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft while the Saudis advanced into southern Khafji. "Again, the attack resembled a Wild West shootout, although with automatic weapons fire and tracers rather than six-shooters," writes Atkinson. "Brave but impetuous, with little thought of clearing the city block by block, the Saudis darted haphazardly through the streets, firing over one another with heavy machine guns." An Iraqi anti-tank missile struck a Saudi personnel carrier, killing six and wounding three. The fighting continued through the night, with intermittent aerial bombardment. By early morning, the allies were in control of most of the town although fighting continued for several more hours, with Iraqi snipers putting up last-ditch resistance.[46] About 30 Iraqi soldiers were killed and 466 taken prisoner, including 37 wounded; seven tanks and nine armored personnel carriers were destroyed. The Saudis and Qataris lost 19 dead and 36 wounded, some of whom may have been victims of 'friendly fire.'[47] Many of the casualties occurred in fierce house-to-house fighting. Christopher Walker of The Times described the scene after the battle:

> In the southern suburbs, it was apparent that the Iraqis had sprung several successful ambushes on the advancing Saudi and Qatari armour. The badly charred body of a Saudi soldier lay in the seat of a still smouldering armoured personnel carrier while a second victim lay half in, half out of the vehicle.... Elsewhere, the streets were strewn with dead camels, twisted lampposts and lumps of concrete from devastated buildings.[48]

Despite pool footage and reports which indicated that the Marines had engaged the Iraqis on the ground, most media initially went along with the official line that American support was limited to air--or, at most, air and artillery--support. As the counter-offensive began, CNN's Rick Sallinger in Riyadh reported that "[w]hile the Marines are not involved in the ground combat, they are providing important air and artillery support" while Charles Jaco in Dhahran said that the Marines had "set up a perimeter, using artillery and anti-tank weapons."[49] Clearly, the situation was confused. Narrating the pool video which showed Marine artillery in action, Wolf Blitzer said that Saudi and other Arab forces were leading the offensive. At his Wednesday briefing, Schwarzkopf also described it as a Saudi operation and refused to be drawn on the U.S. military role: "There's enough American troops where we need them to do the job, and that's about all I'd like to say on that."[50] But what job were they doing?

At the U.S. military briefing on Thursday, Stevens announced that Arab forces had retaken the town with support from Cobra helicopters but, he stressed, "[n]o Marine ground units were engaged in Khafji." This statement was clearly at odds with pool reports and video which showed artillery batteries in action, and Marines firing TOW anti-tank missiles and moving in and out of the town on foot and in armored vehicles. A reporter pressed Stevens: "[Y]ou said that the only U.S. forces engaged in support of the Saudis and Qataris in retaking Khafji were U.S. Marine Corps Cobra helicopters. Pool reports and pool pictures showed us artillery support, armored vehicles, Humvees--apparently a fair amount of activity ... Can you help us clarify this?" Stevens suggested that the reporter was confusing the battle for Khafji with the other border actions in which Marine ground units were involved. The operation, he repeated, was "a coalition action without ground U.S. troops involved." The reporter persisted: "How involved is involved?" "Well, to my knowledge involved is exactly what it means," replied Stevens. "U.S. forces were not engaged in that action."[51] The New York Times, noting the discrepancy, said that Stevens was "[c]learly trying to put Arab troops in the spotlight for political purposes."[52] CNN, reporting the Saudi victory, stated that "[n]o U.S. Marine ground units were actively involved inside the city of Khafji which is located in a zone controlled by Saudi forces." Although the Marines had taken up holding positions around Khafji, reported Aernout Van Lynden of BSkyB News, "the Americans are adamant they didn't participate in the fighting and didn't suffer any casualties." The BBC reported that the town had been liberated in house-to-house fighting by Saudi and Qatari forces under the personal leadership of Prince Khalid bin Sultan and that "[n]o other allied ground forces were involved."[53]

However, a note of caution was beginning to creep into the reporting. The BBC reported that in addition to Cobra helicopters, the Arab forces were supported by Marine artillery and British ground attack Jaguars. And the statement that no other allied ground forces were involved was almost immediately contradicted by pool footage which showed Marines firing from behind a wall and taking cover from incoming fire. A Marine interviewed by pool reporter Jeremy Thompson of ITN said his patrol came under fire when it entered the town: "All of a sudden we just started taking rounds ... my team leader was there, he was walking outside the vehicle. He had to hit the deck." The Marines, said Thompson, "knew they had been in a fight."[54] NBC's Brad Willis, the pool reporter for the American television networks, interviewed a Marine lieutenant who had led reconnaissance patrols in and out of the city and had come under small arms fire. Their outpost was apparently within range too, because as the lieutenant discussed the possibility of starving out the Iraqis, two explosions occurred behind him. "Think we're taking some fire here," he said. BBC correspondent Justin Webb stated that "American Marine units were heavily involved from the outset." At one point, a Marine reconnaissance unit had gone missing after driving into an Iraqi-held area and a rescue mission was abandoned when two Iraqi armored vehicles approached. The missing Marines were eventually found.[55] When the American network news programs aired about two hours later, the once officially invisible Marine ground units had taken, if not center stage, then almost equal billing with the Arab forces. "Allied forces retake the Saudi town of Khafji after stiff Iraqi resistance," announced Tom Brokaw, introducing the NBC Evening News, "and American Marines are in the thick of the fighting." Over the same footage the BBC had used, Brad Willis said the Marines "were in a firefight with Iraqi forces inside the city. For hours in our position just south of the city gates incoming rounds pounded closer and closer." One of the Marines who went on the abortive mission to rescue the reconnaissance team said: "[W]e were following the Saudis' assault ... and when we got to the gates of the city it was just like all hell broke loose, tracers flying everywhere."[56] The discrepancies between reports from Khafji and official statements from Riyadh led BBC Defense Correspondent David Shukman to note that there were unanswered questions "about the extent of American help in the liberation of Khafji." While pool footage showed Marine artillery supporting the Saudis and Qataris, "from Allied headquarters it was only confirmed that U.S. aircraft were involved. That's either an error or an attempt to give the Arab forces a greater share of the credit."[57]

Although there were certainly errors, the latter is the more plausible explanation. Patrick Bishop of The Times, who was with the 1st Marine Division, reported that their deployment in blocking positions south of the town was "a move at least partially dictated by political considerations." He quoted Captain John Borth, commander of an anti-tank platoon: "I know that we've been pretty much ordered to stay away from the town. This is going to be a Saudi-Qatari mission." Another Marine colonel stated: "This was their battle. We tried to stay out of the picture as much as possible."[58] Khafji was a vindication for the Saudis, who had been "stung by widespread suggestions in Europe and the United States in recent months that they lacked the will to fight for their homeland," wrote R.W. Apple. Colonel Jack Petri, the U.S. Army liaison with the Saudis, said: "This was the first battle the Saudis had ever fought, and they acquitted themselves terribly well."[59] Chris Hedges of the New York Times wrote that the battle "has thrown into doubt the quality of Iraqi soldiers and sent the morale of the Arab allies, who have often taken a back seat to the American and British forces, skyward." As a Qatari tank commander put it: "We are very proud. This was the first time our army has seen combat and we have been victorious. People in the Arab world only know about us because of our soccer teams. Now they will know us for our fighting ability."[60]

The new hero of the hour was the commander of the coalition Arab forces, the Saudi general Prince Khalid bin Sultan. As mopping-up operations continued, the Saudi Air Force flew reporters to a nearby base where Khalid congratulated his troops, and awarded a medal to a Saudi pilot who had shot down two Iraqi planes. "The morale of my troops after this fight is just great," said Khalid. Although he appeared to dismiss the significance of the Iraqi attack--"I think it was a suicide mission for them"--Khalid simultaneously described it as "the biggest land battle" of the war in which the Arab forces "gained a lot." In their flight from Khafji, the Iraqis had abandoned equipment and ammunition.[61] Clearly, if the media was not prepared to accept the official line that Khafji was a minor action--"about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant" in Schwarzkopf's much quoted phrase--then a different script would have to be written in which it became a major victory for the coalition Arab forces.

The tenacity of the resistance confirmed the coalition line that the Iraqi army would be no pushover if and when the ground war began. Military commanders, noted the BBC's Justin Webb, "have learned one important lesson--that Iraqi front line troops can fight and fight hard."[62] However, the action raised questions about the effectiveness of the Arab forces which, despite air and artillery support, had taken longer than expected to drive out the Iraqis. Among the lessons of the battle, said The Times, were "the problems of communication and command between the American and other allied forces [and] the relative unreliability of the Saudi army." Asked by Tom Brokaw whether the Americans would continue to allow Arab forces to "take the lead in these kinds of battles," NBC correspondent Arthur Kent pointed out that "one of the prime rules is never to allow an attacking force to gain positions of sanctuary and a defensible position in a place like Khafji." Because of this, said Kent, "the Saudi participation must be under review."[63] As the battle went on, Schwarzkopf, in an interview with CNN correspondent John Sweeney, explained that Iraqi resistance "was a little bit heavier than what they [the Saudis] thought it was going to be, so they're bringing up some more troops but they're in the process of reoccupying the town right now." In his briefing the previous evening, Schwarzkopf had relegated Khafji to the status of a "village." That was "patently inaccurate," said The Times; Tony Clifton of Newsweek said it was "like calling Cleveland a hamlet." Now Schwarzkopf more accurately described it as "fairly large" (its prewar population was about 15,000) to help account for the delay in recapturing it. Then he added: "It's also rolling terrain and there's some hills in there ... so it's not the type of place you just drive right into."[64] No, indeed, but not because of the lay of the land. Khafji lies on the flat expanse of the Gulf coastal plain on the edge of the desert; there are sand dunes on the outskirts but no hills. The commander-in-chief was constructing a geographical fiction to help explain the problems in retaking the town. Anyone who looked at a map, or saw the pool video from Khafji, would have searched in vain for rolling terrain, but Schwarzkopf's assertion went unchallenged at the time.

Leaks in the Pools

The most revealing coverage of the battle for Khafji came not from the pool reporters but from pool busters--journalists who circumvented the official system and made their own way to the fighting. The pool system had been devised by the Pentagon after complaints from news organizations that they were prevented from covering the American invasion of Grenada in 1983. In Fall 1990, when war seemed likely in the Gulf, Pete Williams, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, met with the bureau chiefs of the major television networks, newspapers, magazines and news agencies to work out a pool system. On several occasions, Williams said that the Pentagon did not want to make the pools permanent or issue an extensive set of rules on coverage. "We want to go unilateral as soon as possible," he said, indicating that the pools would be a stopgap until full coverage was feasible. However, in mid-December Williams issued an elaborate list of guidelines. Some minor changes were made after news organizations complained, but the pool and escort system remained.[65]

News organizations sent more than 750 staff members to Saudi Arabia to cover the war, but most were what John Fialka later rather unkindly referred to as "hotel warriors"--based in Riyadh or Dhahran, dependent on military briefings and reports from their colleagues in the pools for information.[66] Journalists, noted Time, had been "griping about the pool system since before the war started."[67] Reporters who protested were frustrated; the Pentagon said changes could be made only with approval of the military command in the Gulf while the briefers in Riyadh referred complaints to the Pentagon. There were only 126 slots in the American pools but even this number was misleading, because many were taken by photographers, videographers and technicians. Less than 30 were assigned to cover the six Army and two Marine divisions on the Kuwaiti and Iraqi borders. Several pools, said R.W. Apple, "have done little but sit around hotels in Dhahran and Riyadh, while others have visited only airbases far behind the lines or ships in the Persian Gulf."[68] Colonel William Mulvey, head of the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran, promised to increase the number of pools and improve access, but cited problems--the unwillingness of some commanders to accept reporters, a shortage of helmets and flak jackets, and difficulties in transportation and communication. Mulvey, according to the *New York Times*, "has lost the confidence of the press corps as the days have rolled by with no major change, and questions have mounted about the fairness of the entire system." Some American divisions had no pool reporters and "several middle-ranking field commanders, eager for publicity, have told correspondents that they are welcome if they can find some means to get around the pool system and ground rules." Military officials said the pool system was intended to provide access while avoiding the nightmare of hundreds of journalists trying to reach the front lines at once. "Having reporters running around would overwhelm the battlefield," said Mulvey.[69]

However, for some journalists, running around seemed to be the only way to get the story. "Hampered by a pool arrangement that restricts them largely to specified trips arranged by military officials," said *Time*, "correspondents grew restless--and reckless." By the end of the second week of the war, journalists based in Hafer Al-Batin in northwestern Saudi Arabia were driving out to reach American, British and Arab units operating in the border area. "Increasingly, wrote John Kifner of the *New York Times*, "frustrated journalists who are unable to get a spot in the pools ... have started 'freelancing'--driving out independently in rented vehicles outside pool guidelines in hopes of hooking up with troops or seeing action."[70] Some painted military insignia on their vehicles and wore military uniforms; although this helped them get through military road blocks, it also increased their chances of being mistaken for combatants by the Iraqis. Not that the Iraqis posed the only physical threat. One veteran news agency photographer spent more than six hours in the desert surrounded by six armed Marines who threatened to shoot him if he left his car. "We have orders from above to make this pool system work," one of the officers explained. Some U.S. soldiers at road blocks were ordered to remove a wheel from journalists' cars until Saudi security forces arrived to take them away. In another incident, the Alabama National Guard blindfolded and held a photographer for 30 hours, and challenged him to name the Governor of New York, among other questions, to prove he was not an Iraqi spy. Although there were no formal penalties for defying the pool system, U.S. military officials reported offenders to the Saudi authorities, who temporarily revoked press credentials and visas. When Chris Hedges of the *New York Times*, who had been detained for five hours after trying to obtain an interview at an American military hospital, showed up to recover his press credentials, he was told: "You have an attitude problem."[71]

The most celebrated instance of freelancing occurred on January 21 when CBS correspondent Bob Simon and his three-man crew strayed across the Saudi-Kuwaiti border and were captured and held by the Iraqis until the end of the war. The incident seemed to support the military's contention that the pool system was necessary to provide protection for journalists in a vast area of few roads and fewer road signs where Iraqi patrols might be operating. Although the experience of the CBS crew was seen by some as a sober warning to play by the rules, other journalists continued to go unilateral. "The last thing Bob Simon would want," said John King of the Associated Press, "is for us to stop covering the war because he disappeared."[72]

King was one of the journalists who made their way into Khafji while the fighting was going on. It was these reporters, said the *New York Times*, "who got there on their own, in violation of the Pentagon ground rules," who provided "the best accounts of the fighting at Khafji." Pool reporters with the 1st Marine Division were not allowed into Khafji until 18 hours after the fighting started. Tony Clifton of *Newsweek* described the experience of one "quick reaction" pool which arrived in Khafji in pitch darkness, was given access to the Saudi commander for 10 minutes, then whisked off "to see Iraqi prisoners." Fifteen miles into the desert, their bus broke down, and it was an hour before the almost frozen reporters were picked up. Early reports came mostly from the freelancers and they added to the confusion over the scale of the battle and the role of the Marines.[73] King watched as the Arab forces fought to retake the town: "The pools did not get an accurate view because they didn't see it. They wrote that the Saudi and Qatari troops liberated the city, but they had no realistic view of how long it took, what happened or how many Iraqis were in there."[74] As Apple noted, pool reporters were kept away from the fighting "so they had to quote staff officers far from the scene, who glorified Saudi and Qatari troops for political purposes, and understated the fierceness of Iraqi resistance."[75] These journalists had to contend not only with the American and Saudi military, but with their own colleagues in the pools who feared their behavior would lead to increased restrictions. A French TV crew that arrived on the outskirts of Khafji was greeted by angry shouts from pool reporters. According to producer Alain Debos, the crew was forced at gunpoint by Marines to hand over footage it had taken of a wounded American soldier. NBC's Brad Willis, a member of a Marine pool, reportedly had military officials order out other journalists who had reached the scene on their own.[76]

The best footage of the battle came from two French TV crews and a team from Britain's Visnews, which were in Khafji well before the pools arrived, but little of this was seen on American television. French television viewers, by contrast, saw scenes of destruction in Khafji which suggested the intensity and confusion of the battle. As explosions lit up the night sky, correspondent Patrick Bourrat said it was impossible to distinguish who was firing. In the early morning, his crew followed Saudi and Qatari tanks into the town. They found the wreckage of a Saudi armored personnel carrier, hit by an anti-tank missile, and an abandoned Iraqi tank transporter. Standing near the giant archway at the entrance to the town, Bourrat reported that "the battle raged all night." The Saudi army, he added, "does not know whether there are still several hundred Iraqis inside Khafji." Artillery shells were hitting a water tower where, Bourrat said, Iraqi snipers could be sheltering. As a Marine reconnaissance team ran for cover, the crew headed out of the town, returning after the Arab troops had regained control. Their footage indicated the scale and intensity of the fighting--the wreckage of tanks, armored personnel carriers and other vehicles, some still burning, shattered buildings, and abandoned ammunition.[77]

Bourrat and his crew had evaded military checkpoints to enter Khafji while the fighting was still going on. Indeed, some of the most resourceful and successful pool-busting came from French reporters. French television coverage was markedly different in tone from that seen in the United States and Britain--partly because of what some saw as a lukewarm commitment to the coalition (Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement resigned in a dispute over war objectives), and partly because of sensitivity to France's large Arab population and historic ties to North Africa, where there was much pro-Iraqi sentiment.[78] The French government was, if anything, even more mistrustful of its press than the Americans and British, and placed strict limits on access to the French forces. The new Defense Minister, Pierre Joxe, was decidedly unsympathetic to a group of television correspondents who petitioned for more access to the French military and "the same rights as our British and American colleagues enjoy." Pointing out that France, unlike the United States and Britain, did not require correspondents to submit their despatches for clearance, he replied frostily: "This request for censorship will be considered."[79] There were no places for French correspondents in the American and British pools, so it is hardly surprising that they defied the system. As Steve Anderson, a producer for BBC2's Newsnight program, put it in an interview after the war: "No system of military censorship has yet been devised that can thwart the French freelance. Wherever you go, wherever you think you're striking out first, the French freelance is always there, and [has] been there for a week. ... I don't know what it is about the French but they always do it ... [they] don't play by the rules."[80] With some exceptions, said his colleague Mark Urban, American reporters meekly accepted the military information system:

> The Americans, I just found their behavior extraordinary, really. They weren't testing the system. They weren't behaving as great truth crusaders; they were sitting in Riyadh, winging [it]. Amazing behavior from the Americans. The people who were up and down the road, Khafji or Hafer [Al-Batin] or whatever, every day, were the Brits and French. I mean everywhere you went there would be some bloody mad Frenchman. I mean the French were constantly tearing the arse out of it and they sort of refused to go into the pool arrangement. They were brilliant, which I think may be carrying it a bit far in the other direction."[81]

The Impact of Khafji on Military-Media Relations

The battle of Khafji placed severe strains on the coalition information system--and found it wanting. In the first two weeks of the war, the military had been relatively successful in controlling the flow of information. Apart from minor border skirmishes and naval operations, all the action was in the air over Iraq and Kuwait. Reporters had to rely on briefings and occasional interviews with pilots for information and, although they may have felt they were not getting the whole story, they had no alternative; no one planned to fly alongside B-52s on bombing missions. The nature of the war changed with the attack on Khafji. The inaccessible air war was, for a few days, replaced by a ground battle that was within driving distance for enterprising reporters. R.W. Apple predicted that "the pool system may be on the verge of collapse."[82]

The military command knew its relations with the media were deteriorating. In the days before Khafji, the tone of the briefings "grew testy, as tight-lipped officers evaded questions as simple as what the weather was like over Iraq." Often, noted the New York Times, "information is witheld at the briefing when reporters in the field, working under de facto censorship, have nonetheless written or broadcast it." Some correspondents who had worked in Vietnam even compared the briefings unfavorably to the so-called "Five o'Clock Follies" in Saigon because less information was available. "It's incredible," said Richard Pyle of the Associated Press, "but I find myself longing for the give-and-take of the follies."[83] Tensions increased as briefers fielded questions about discrepancies between official statements on the fighting at Khafji and accounts from pool reporters and unilaterals. On February 1, "the mood in the briefing room turned so sour" that Schwarzkopf, who was watching on television, called in journalists to listen to their complaints. According to the New York Times, he was "fearful that the briefings ... would begin to affect public opinion if permitted to degenerate into wrangling sessions."[64] On February 3, new arrangements were announced. The military agreed to hold a morning background briefing and a question-and-answer session after the televised evening briefing. The objective was to provide more freedom for briefers to answer questions because the sessions would not be televised and the officers would not be identified. Stevens, who had become visibly uncomfortable dealing with questions, was replaced by the more telegenic Major-General Robert Johnston. Schwarzkopf and other commanders began to grant more personal interviews."[65]

Nine days later, the military announced that it was increasing the number of pools assigned to cover U.S. ground forces. Of the 15 American pools, only two were regularly assigned to the Army and Marines; most visited ships in the Persian Gulf and air force bases. Captain R.E. Wildermuth of the Navy, the chief public information officer in the Gulf, said that five pools, with seven members each, would be reassigned to ground forces within a week--three to Army units, and two to the Marine Amphibious Force. "This is a response to the complaints of the press corps, who have brought to our attention the inadequacies of the current system," he said. The changes were welcomed by pool reporters, but they did little to meet the concerns of hundreds of other journalists who remained dependent on briefings and pool reports.[66] The latter inevitably gave the war an Anglo-American slant, because pool slots were reserved for British and American news organizations. On February 12, 300 journalists from 23 countries (but none from Britain and the United States) signed an open letter to King Fahd and the allied commanders warning that unless access was improved they would attempt to defy restrictions:

> Frustration about the system is reaching crisis point among international journalists. ... Our understanding of this military conflict is that it is carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. However, the clear impression here is that Americans and the American military are in total command of the situation, including the movement of foreign nationals on sovereign Saudi territory."[67]

Frustration was also reaching crisis point in the French press corps. On February 12, the U.S. military asked the Saudi government to deport four French unilaterals who had evaded road blocks to enter Khafji. A week later, the Mitterand government, outraged by a TF1 interview with French soldiers who claimed they did not know why they were in the Gulf but said that it might have been to fight for oil, banned TV crews from the front.

Leaks in the Pool: The Press at the Gulf War Battle of Khafji

Acknowledgements:

The most comprehensive collection of television coverage is at the University of Leeds Institute of Communication Studies. One week before the Gulf War began, the Institute began round-the-clock recording of Britain's BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4, CNN and BSkyB, and evening programming from TF1 (France), BR2 (Germany), RAI Uno (Italy) and the Soviet Gorizont satellite service. Recording continued until a week after the ceasefire. The archive, with approximately 10,500 hours of videotape, includes selected news and current affairs programs made after the war, and oral history interviews with several correspondents. I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Institute for their assistance during my research in the archive in December 1994. In particular, my thanks go to the Institute's Deputy Director, Dr. Philip M. Taylor, whose book on the media in the Gulf War first aroused my interest in the subject, and who helped me to identify key issues in information management. Dr. Brent MacGregor of the Institute provided me with interview transcripts and other useful material. Graduate student Joseph Khalil assisted in the translation and analysis of French television coverage.

Notes:

The television footage is identified by date and time; all times are Greenwich Mean Time, which is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and three hours behind Riyadh and Baghdad. All dates are in 1991, unless otherwise noted.

1.CNN, January 30, 14:02, University of Leeds, Institute of Communication Studies Gulf War Archive (ULICS).

2.Interview with John Sweeney, CNN, January 31, 16:44, ULICS, also quoted in New York Times, February 1, p. A8, February 2, p. 1, International Herald Tribune, February 1, p. 1, and on TF1, 20 Heures, January 31, 19:00, ULICS; BBC One o'Clock News, February 1, 13:07, ULICS.

3.Time, February 11, p. 21; Le Monde, February 2, p. 1.

4.John R. MacArthur, Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). The coalition consisted of 31 countries, of which 14 sent troops to the Gulf; seven made naval contributions only. Seventeen other countries made economic, humanitarian or other contributions to the coalition.

5.The Times, February 1, p. 1; February 2, p. 1; New York Times, February 2, p. 4; Time, February 11, p. 23.

6.In its first report of the attack, CNN noted that "over the past few days, coalition commanders have reported a series of minor skirmishes and exchanges with Iraqi ground forces." January 30, 14:02, ULICS. The Saudi briefer, Colonel Ahmed Al-Robayan, said that Iraqi units had been "probing coalition defenses along the border, sometimes with missiles and artillery and sometimes with tanks and infantry." Saudi briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 15:32, ULICS. CNN's Defense correspondent Wolf Blitzer said that in the first two weeks of the war there had been "sporadic Iraqi efforts to engage the U.S. and the allies on the ground, mostly very brief fights." January 30, 17:47, ULICS.

7.The Times, February 1, p. 1; New York Times, February 1, p. A1. The initial reports greatly overestimated the size of the Iraqi force; the following day, Pentagon officials said it was closer to 8,000. New York Times, February 2, p. 1.

8.Philip M. Taylor, War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 138.

9.BSkyB News, January 31, 17:07, ULICS.

10.Rick Atkinson, Crusade: The Untold Story of the Gulf War (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 201. 'R'as' is Arabic for peninsula. The town's full name was rarely used; typically, it was referred to as 'Khafji' or 'Al-Khafji.'

11.Atkinson provides a detailed account of the surprise Iraqi attack, and the decision by the Marine observers to stay in the town in Crusade, pp. 202-204. The two teams hid in buildings and called in artillery fire to scare off Iraqis who came close. According to Colonel John Admire, Iraqi soldiers entered the buildings several times but did not discover the Marines. The Times, February 1, p. 1.

12.Apparently, the observers were able to provide detailed information on the disposition of the Iraqis. In an interview with French television correspondent Patrick Bourrat, the Marine Colonel coordinating the artillery said that they waited for allied troops to leave the town before resuming fire, and were targeting a group of 17 Iraqi vehicles whose position had been reported by the observers. TF1, 20 Heures, January 31, 19:00, ULICS.

13.CNN, January 30, 13:16, 14:02, ULICS.

14.Central Command (CENTCOM) briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 14:30, ULICS.

15.CNN, January 30, 14:15, 14:21, ULICS. Granting that it was impossible to know if the Iraqis still held Khafji, Jaco resorted to hypothesis. "_If_ there are Iraqi troops in Khafji they're completely surrounded, cut off from both the south and the north. And if they are there everyone estimates it's a small force and they've got no place to go."

16.CNN, January 30, 14:44, 15:04, ULICS. As CNN anchor Bob Cain noted, "the flurry of often contradictory reports in a situation like this is pretty much inevitable. The nature of the virtually instant reporting we get makes that seem all the more pronounced." January 30, 14:47, ULICS. As Taylor notes, it was unlikely that "anyone had a clear picture at that stage of what was actually happening. Trying to piece together various intelligence reports from the front was as difficult for the military as it was for the media." _War and the Media_, p. 142.

17._International Herald Tribune_, February 1, p. 1; CNN, January 30, 15:17; January 31, 15:01, 15:03, ULICS.

18._The Times_, February 1, p. 4; _International Herald Tribune_, February 1, p. 3; CNN, January 31, 16:56, ULICS. Pro-Iraqi feeling was strong in the North African countries of the Maghreb. In Algeria, 400,000 followers of the Islamic Front demanded military training for those who wanted to fight with the Iraqis. King Hassan of Morocco, one of the first Arab leaders to support the coalition by sending 1,500 troops to the Gulf, faced increasing pressure to recall them. The day before the attack on Khafji, Moroccan trade unions organized a one-day solidarity strike, and on February 3 at least 300,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of the capital, Rabat, and burned American, British, French and Israeli flags. Tunisia deployed tanks and soldiers around the American, British and French embassies and closed high schools and universities to discourage protests. The Times, February 1, p. 4; New York Times, February 4, p. A9, February 6, p. A11.

19. International Herald Tribune, February 1, p. 3; The Times, February 1, p. 4; CNN, January 31, 16:15, ULICS; New York Times, February 1, p. A7; New York Times Week in Review, February 3, sec. 4, p. 1.

20. New York Times, February 2, p. 4; Time, February 18, p. 28; TF1, 20 Heures, January 31, 19:00, ULICS; The Times, February 1, pp. 1, 11. R.W. Apple noted that President Hosni Mubarak had predicted that the war would be over in a month. "Even if the Egyptian leader is right, that will mean Mr. Hussein has succeeded in standing up to an immense Western juggernaut for six weeks, which is better than Egypt did against Israel in two tries. If the Iraqi leader survives, he clearly believes that his defiant resistance ... will give him a strong claim to regional authority in this vital but chronically unstable part of the world." New York Times, February 2, p. 4.

21. CNN, January 31, 21:44, ULICS; BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS. "What we have to learn," said one Western military source, "is that the Iraqis are playing this to win on the stage of Arab and Third World opinion, not so much to win the land battle for Kuwait that, in the long run, they must know they are going to lose." The Times, February 1, p. 3.

22. Correspondent Judith Miller in Riyadh noted the ambiguity of Arab reaction, which was rooted in memories of defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War with Israel. Even in Saudi Arabia, many felt "a begrudging respect" for Saddam Hussein, and were relieved that "another Arab leader had not been humiliated at the hands of the West." Egypt and Saudi Arabia felt it was important that Iraq should not be dismembered, but preserved as a regional military power and a bulwark against Iran. The Saudi press refrained from calling Saddam Hussein "the enemy," using the milder term "aggressor." A Saudi official said: "This is a part of the world in which force and strength are respected. And even though we are opposed to him in this struggle, many here still admire, despite themselves, what they view as his steely resolve." New York Times, February 1, p. A10; see also New York Times Week in Review, February 3, sec. 4, p. 1.

23.BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS; CNN, January 30, 15:17, ULICS.

24.Saudi briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 15:32, ULICS.

25.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 16:00, ULICS.

26.New York Times, February 2, p. 1.

27.The Times, February 1, p. 2, February 2, pp. 2, 3; New York Times, February 1, p. A9, February 2, pp. 1, 4. At the British briefing in Riyadh on January 31, the joint British forces commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, agreed that Saddam Hussein "does have the option of massing more powerful forces and coming more deeply into Saudi Arabia." But such a move would tempt disaster. "I think as an airman I would welcome it because he will come out of well prepared defensive positions with his armored forces and Republican Guards when we can get at them." CNN, January 31, 18:04, ULICS.

28.New York Times, February 1, p. A8, February 2, pp. 1, 4; The Times, February 1, p. 1; Schwarzkopf interview with John Sweeney, CNN, January 31, 16:40, ULICS.

29.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS. Schwarzkopf said the allies had attacked 38 Iraqi airfields, putting nine out of operation and destroying hardened aircraft bunkers and planes on the ground. Iraqi pilots had flown 89 aircraft to Iran. "The simple fact of the matter," he added, "is that now every time an Iraqi airplane takes off the ground it is running away."

30.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS. It later emerged that only 11 Marines had been killed, and that they died in the larger battle around Al- Wafra, to the west of Khafji. Seven were victims of 'friendly fire.' A heat-seeking Maverick missile from a U.S. Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft, fired towards an Iraqi tank, was diverted by the hot exhaust of a Marine light armored vehicle, and smacked into the left rear side, killing all seven Marines inside. The Times, February 4, p. 2; Time, February 18, p. 24; Atkinson, Crusade, pp. 206-207.

31.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS. Schwarzkopf made a point of differentiating between Khafji and the other actions along the border. Everywhere the Iraqis had met resistance, they were driven back; they had been able to enter Khafji only because they were unopposed.

32.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS. Schwarzkopf made the same point in an interview with CNN correspondent John Sweeney: "I don't think that this was a very well conducted attack. In some corners this has been touted as a great victory. To me it's about as significant as a mosquito on an elephant. ... more than anything else it's a propaganda victory for the Iraqis if they want to use it. You know, 'We have seized a Saudi town or something like that.' Khafji wasn't defended; there weren't any troops there. There was never any intention to defend Khafji so in essence you can't really say they captured Khafji. ... I guess if you want to call that a victory you can--I would never declare that a victory." CNN, January 31, 16:36, ULICS.

33.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 31, 15:06, ULICS; Pentagon briefing, CNN, January 31, 20:30, ULICS.

34.The Times, February 1, p. 3. Christopher Walker noted that some military observers were surprised by "the speed and flexibility shown by the Iraqis, who had been regarded as hopeless in mobile warfare." The Times, February 2, p. 1.

35.The Times, February 1, p. 3; CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS.

36.CNN, January 30, 17:43, ULICS. When the footage was shown later, the expletive was deleted. However, as Taylor notes, the release of the pool video showed that "matters of taste and decency in language at least were being left to the journalists rather than the military censors to decide." War and the Media, p. 143.

37.TF1, 20 Heures, February 1, 19:00, ULICS; International Herald Tribune, February 1, p. 1; New York Times, February 1, pp. A1, A8; The Times, February 1, p. 1, February 2, pp. 1, 2, 3.

47.New York Times, February 2, p. 4; The Times, February 2, p. 1. At a British briefing, it was reported that 300 rather than 30 Iraqis had been killed. This unfortunate statement was attributed to a clerical error.

48.The Times, February 2, p. 1.

49.CNN, January 30, 14:12, 14:21, ULICS. Most reports indicated that Marine Cobra helicopters had played a key role in the battle. However, a Marine Colonel directing artillery outside Khafji told French television correspondent Patrick Bourrat that the Cobras were ineffective at night because they could not accurately locate targets. "In urban combat, they become powerless," he said. TF1, 20 Heures, January 31, 19:00, ULICS.

50.CNN, January 30, 17:43, ULICS; CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 30, 18:00, ULICS.

51.CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 31, 15:06, ULICS.

52.New York Times, February 1, p. A8.

53.CNN, January 31, 15:50, ULICS; BSkyB News, January 31, 17:00, ULICS; BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS. The Saudis said they had captured the town "with the welcome help of American and Qatar [sic] allies." Saudi briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 31, 16:07, ULICS.

54.BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS. Thompson's pool report was shown on CNN at 17:32 on January 31.

55.CNN, January 31, 18:35, ULICS; BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS. Further evidence of the involvement of Marine ground forces came in Thompson's pool report, which included an account of the abortive mission to rescue the Marine reconnaissance unit. Major Craig Huddleston said the vehicle was found abandoned "but we saw no bloodstains or sign of them. The staff sergeant ran around the vehicle hollering 'U.S. Marines, U.S. Marines.' We got no response and then we had to get out of there. The two [Iraqi] BMPs were several hundred metres away." CNN, January 31, 17:32, ULICS.

56.NBC News, January 31, ULICS.

57.BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS.

58.The Times, February 1, p. 3; New York Times, February 2, p. 5. After the war, Chris Hedges of the New York Times wrote: "It is worth remembering that during the first 24 hours of the fighting in Khafji ... the allied commanders insisted that only Arab forces were battling the Iraqis. They changed the story after an AP reporter climbed into a U.S. armored personnel carrier and drove into the city, where he witnessed Marines engaging Iraqi troops. The U.S. wanted to build the confidence of the Arab troops, but at the expense of the truth. "The Unilaterals," Columbia Journalism Review, May-June, 1991, p. 28.

59.New York Times, February 1, p. A9, February 2, p. 4. The joint British forces commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, paid tribute to the Saudis for their "very notable part in expelling the Iraqis ... under the personal leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Khalid." British briefing, Riyadh, January 31, 18:02, ULICS. Indeed, the allies seemed encouraged by the performance of the untested Saudi troops. "To the immense relief of the Americans," wrote Atkinson, "the Saudi army had demonstrated that it could fight with zeal and courage--if not with tactical prowess. Braced by his success against the vaunted Iraqi legions, Khalid became more insistent on a larger role for Arab troops in the ground campaign." Crusade, p. 212.

60.New York Times, February 2, p. 5.

61.New York Times, February 1, pp. A1, A9; Saudi briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 31, 16:07, ULICS; BBC One o'Clock News, February 1, ULICS.

62.BBC Nine o'Clock News, January 31, ULICS.

63.The Times, February 1, p. 3; NBC News, January 31, ULICS. The New York Times noted "fragmentary" field reports of coordination problems, including "incidents in which Saudi and Qatari forces may have fired on each other." February 2, p. 4. Even after the battle was over, confusion remained. French television correspondent Catherine Gentile reported that Saudi reinforcements on the outskirts of the town "do not really know what is happening ... they asked us whether the Iraqis were still in Khafji." TF1, 20 Heures, February 1, 19:00, ULICS.

64.CNN, January 31, 16:36, ULICS; The Times, February 1, p. 3; Newsweek, February 11, p. 37.

65.New York Times, February 13, p. A15. For background on the pool system and disputes between the military and the press corps, see Taylor, War and the Media, pp. 51-59; MacArthur, Second Front, pp. 3-36; Gary C. Woodward, "The Rules of the Game: The Military and the Press in the Persian Gulf War" in The Media and the Persian Gulf War, Robert E. Denton, Jr., ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), pp. 1-26.

66.John J. Fialka, Hotel Warriors: Covering the Gulf War (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1991.) Many journalists were aware of their predicament. "Now I know why I haven't had children," wrote Tony Clifton. "It's because later in my life, I don't want some innocent child saying, 'Daddy, what did you do in the Gulf War?' Because I would have to reply, 'Child, I watched it on CNN, from an armchair in a big hotel in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.'" Newsweek, February 11, p. 36. The Associated Press reported that of the 757 journalists and technicians accredited by the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran, only 106 were assigned to pools. Editor & Publisher, February 9, p. 46.

67.Time, February 18, p. 39. The pool system fomented disputes between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' of the press corps. Some of the harshest critics of the system were news organizations that claimed to have been shut out of the pools by their competitors. Agence-France Presse, for example, claimed it had been unfairly excluded from the wire service photo pool, and denied access to pool photos. Frank Aukofer, Washington bureau chief for the Milwaukee Journal, criticized the monopoly of pool slots by major American newspapers, the so-called "Sacred 14." These newspapers ran the pool system "like some kind of despotic monarchy," causing "tremendous rancor and bitterness" in the press corps. Instead of fighting with the military for access, news organizations were fighting with each other. Editor & Publisher, February 9, pp. 9, 46.

68.New York Times, February 12, p. A14. Apple said that until February 3, "[n]o reporter from the six-member bureau of the New

York times had spent a single day as an authorized correspondent with American ground forces."

69.New York Times, February 4, p. A9; Time, February 4, p. 45.

70.Time, February 4, p. 44; New York Times, February 9, p. 7; see also Taylor, War and the Media, pp. 59-62.

71.The Times, February 9, p. 1; New York Times, February 9, p. 7, February 12, p. A14.

72.Time, February 18, p. 39. Simon describes his capture and captivity in his book Forty Days (New York: Putnam, 1992.)

73.New York Times, February 4, p. A9; Time, February 18, p. 39; Newsweek, February 11, pp. 36-37. The confusion exasperated briefers like Stevens. "[W]e have a situation where your colleagues are out all over the battlefield," he said. "And you're going to get reports from them about things that I cannot necessarily confirm because we have to make very, very sure that what I tell you is authenticated before I stand up here and say it." CENTCOM briefing, Riyadh, CNN, January 31, 15:06, ULICS.

74.Time, February 18, p. 39.

75.New York Times, February 4, p. A9.

76.Time, February 18, p. 39; New York Times, February 9, p. 7.

77.TF1, 20 Heures, January 31, 19:00, February 1, 19:00, ULICS.

78.Not only did French television "go to what sometimes seem inordinate lengths not to offend Arab viewers at home and abroad," said The Times, but it presented an ethnocentric view of the war, giving "virtually no coverage to British military involvement." To French viewers, "the only nations participating seem to be France and America." The TV networks blamed limited access to British media pools and briefings, but diplomats in Paris "speculate that the authorities may not want to encourage French viewers to ponder why Britain has three times more troops in the Gulf than its richer European partner." In a tongue-in-cheek footnote, The Times reported that the private channel TF1 had incurred official disapproval for interviewing "four disaffected French soldiers who shocked viewers at home by disclosing that 'the soup is bad' in French army kitchens." During a visit to Saudi Arabia, the Defense Minister promised to investigate culinary conditions. The Times, February 6, p. 11, February 13, p. 12.

79. The Times, February 6, p. 11.

80. Interview by Alison Preston, ULICS.

81. Interview by Brent MacGregor, ULICS.

82. New York Times, February 4, p. A9.

83. Time, February 4, p. 44; New York Times, February 4, p. A9.

84. New York Times, February 4, p. A9.

85. New York Times, February 4, p. A9; International Herald Tribune, February 4, p. 3. Even the untelevised briefings became a contentious issue in the press corps. Reporters in Riyadh felt they would provide background and off-the-record information. Their colleagues in Dhahran, who followed the briefings on CNN, protested; if they could not listen to the briefings, they said they would no longer send copies of their pool reports to Riyadh. Editor & Publisher, February 9, p. 46.

86. New York Times, February 13, p. A15. Wildermuth added that more public affairs officers would be available to help reporters and that "we will do our best to find acceptable ways to open up" access to military activities. In early February, several small news organizations which were excluded from the pools had filed suit against the government in Federal Court in New York, arguing that the Pentagon rules were an unconstitutional infringement of press freedom. New York Times, February 13, p. A15.

87. The Times, February 13, p. 6.

88.The Times, February 13, p ?, February 19, p. 6.

89.Taylor, War and the Media, p. 159.

90.The Times, February 1, p. 3.

Professional clock-punchers:
Journalists and the overtime provisions
# of the Fair Labor Standards Act

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INTRODUCTION

Journalists typically see themselves as skeptical observers who expose the pompous rhetoric, self-serving rationalizations, and hypocrisy of news subjects, especially the powerful. So, when journalists and media owners fall into rhetoric and rationalizations concerning issues about the business of journalism, the hypocrisy is especially ironic.

Such is the case with both sides of the current debate between owners and workers over the status of journalists as professionals under federal labor law. At stake is money: overtime pay that means additional expenses for owners and additional income for journalists. This struggle has led owners to argue that journalists are professionals under the law, and hence exempt from the federal mandate concerning payment of overtime, even though owners have never treated working journalists like professionals. Journalists, on the other hand, argue that they are not professional, and hence are covered by the overtime mandate, even though journalists and their associations have long held themselves up to the public as professionals. I argue that the workers' position is the strongest but requires a rethinking of journalistic professionalism.

Part I of this paper explains the relevant statutes and regulations. Part II examines the bulk of the recent cases, which support journalistic workers' claims to overtime. Part III looks at the sole case in which a judge ruled for an owner, with special attention to how journalistic objectivity became an issue. In Part IV, I discuss how the professionalization of journalism has mainly benefited owners, to the detriment of journalistic workers and the public, and argue for economic justice and increased democracy in the newsroom.

PART I: THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT AND OVERTIME PAY

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)[1] established a minimum wage and overtime compensation at time-and-a-half for hours worked past a 40-hour work week. Passed in 1938 as part of the second wave of New Deal legislation, the law established a floor for wages and a ceiling for hours for millions of workers. Subsequent judicial interpretation suggests that the purpose of the overtime provision was to reduce unemployment by encouraging employers to hire more workers rather than force current employees to work excessive hours, and to fairly compensate employees for working excessive hours.[2] Other possible reasons for the legislation include preventing employees who were willing to work longer hours from taking jobs from those who resisted, and preventing accidents that result when people are tired from overwork.[3]

The overtime provision does not cover all employees, however, providing an exemption for:

> any employee employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity (including any employee employed in the capacity of academic administrative personnel or teacher in elementary or secondary schools), or in the capacity of outside salesman.[4]

The law also includes an exemption for small newspapers (circulation under 4,000)[5] and broadcast stations (in certain cities of less than 100,000 population, depending on their distance from other cities).[6] These exemptions have been held to be non-discriminatory.[7] In cases where one company owns a group of newspapers in the same area, a court has ruled recently that circulation can be aggregated.[8]

Court cases and Department of Labor interpretations in the 1940s clearly stated that reporters, editors, and photographers[9] were not exempt and had to be paid overtime.[10] The administrative exemption applies to a worker whose primary duties relate to "management policies or general business operations" and who "customarily and regularly exercises discretion and independent judgment."[11] This exemption is rarely the source of litigation, especially at mainstream news outlets.[12]

The professional exemption is of most concern for journalists. Early court rulings followed the interpretation of the law reached by the Department of Labor,[13] which was charged with promulgating opinions to be used in enforcing the FLSA.[14] The status of journalists under the FLSA must be examined under the two types of exemptions: the "learned" and the "artistic" professional. The "learned" category covers:

> Work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction and study, as distinguished from a general academic education and from an apprenticeship, and from training in the performance of routine mental, manual, or physical processes.[15]

In its interpretations, the DOL clearly rules out journalism as a learned profession, calling it a "quasi-profession ... in which the bulk of the employees have acquired their skill by experience rather than by any formal specialized training."[16]

The "artistic" exemption covers:

> Work that is original and creative in character in a recognized field of artistic endeavor (as opposed to work which can be produced by a person endowed with general manual or intellectual ability and training), and the result of which depends primarily on the

invention, imagination, or talent of the employee.[17]

According to the DOL, the "reporting of news, the rewriting of stories received from various sources, or the routine editorial work of a newspaper" is not exempt.[18] However, editorial writers, columnists, critics, and "top-flight" writers of analytical and interpretative articles are exempt, according to the DOL, because of the original and creative nature of their work.[19]

Federal courts have long applied these regulations in a straightforward manner. A U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1944 rejected the idea that journalists were learned professionals, stating that it was "common knowledge that few newspaper employees are graduates of specialized schools of journalism," and that most editors in the business agreed "the only practical school of journalism is the newspaper office."[20] That court also reiterated a Supreme Court decision[21] that found no First Amendment violation in the application of wage-and-hour standards to a newspaper.

In cases where journalistic employees have been ruled to be professionals, the employees at issue have fit into one of these narrow exemptions, and the basic definitions have not been challenged. For example:

/ A city editor was deemed to be a professional employee when writing a training manual. However, a night city editor, assistant city editor and Sunday editor were not executive or administrative employees, and the newspaper stipulated that reporters were not exempt.[22]

/ An employee who functioned as head of the news department of a radio station was exempt as a professional.[23]

/ A newspaper employee who wrote commentary, opinion and criticism about radio and television programs was exempt as an artistic professional, even if he was required to handle some routine work, because he had discretion over the subjects and tone of his column and produced individualized analysis, interpretation, and criticism that were the product of his creativity.[24]

/ The sports director/anchor of a small TV station was an exempt administrative and artistic professional because of his "uniqueness as a sportscaster entertainer."[25] However, trial and appellate courts ruled the opposite way in a subsequent case that involved the same station and same job title, but a different employee.[26]

PART II: RECENT CHALLENGES TO JOURNALISTS' NON-EXEMPT STATUS

Beginning in the 1980s and into the '90s, newspaper and broadcast station owners renewed the challenge to the non-professional designation for all journalists. The American Newspaper Publishers Association sounded the call to arms in response to the DOL's 1986 call for input on proposed changes in the definitions of professions,[27] arguing that journalists were artists, not unlike short-story writers.[28] The ANPA rejected the view that journalists were mechanics and argued that "inventiveness" could be more important for journalists who write "straight news" than those who write opinion pieces.

> The fact that a reporter avoids or minimizes expressing in the news story his or her individual views, as those of the newspaper, in no way supports a conclusion that the reporter does not rely upon interpretation and creativity to develop that news story.[29]

Owners have also pressed their case in court. In four of the recent cases, two involving newspapers (weekly and daily) and two involving television (local and network), district courts followed the earlier interpretations. Appellate decisions have been handed down in three of the four cases, affirming the results. (Part III discusses the sole case that has gone the other way.)

In general, these cases suggest that because no formal education is required for a career in journalism and success is based more on a mix of a general critical thinking ability and experience, journalists are not exempt as learned professionals. And while journalists sometimes do creative and imaginative work, the courts have ruled that work is not artistic in the sense intended by the law, and hence journalists are not exempt as artistic professionals. A more detailed look at some of these cases follows.

In 1981, the DOL filed suit on behalf of 33 journalists who claimed almost $46,000 in unpaid overtime at the Concord (NH) Monitor, a 21,000-circulation non-union daily. Monitor managers appear to have been ambiguous about an overtime policy. In depositions and trial testimony, reporters at the paper told how they were expected to work as long as needed to do the job, but were both subtly and openly discouraged from claiming those overtime hours. At the trial one reporter testified:

> Clearly every time you put in for overtime, no matter how little, I would say eyebrows were raised. Voices weren't necessarily raised, but the message was clear that overtime was not liked at the Monitor.[30]

Another reporter testified that when she went to the city editor to discuss the problem of getting her work done without overtime, she was told, "You'll have to figure that one out for yourself."[31] After a 10-day trial in 1986, U.S. District Judge Shane Devine finally issued a ruling in 1993,[32] finding for the employees.[33]

On the question of the learned professional exemption, Devine noted that half the journalists in question did not have a journalism degree, finding that "a good liberal arts education and an ability to think and write clearly form the foundation of success in journalism" and that no prolonged course of specialized study is necessary.[34] On the artistic exemption, Devine ruled that while some of work product of the journalists was original and creative, most is not, and he rejected the managing editor's comparison of journalists to sculptors, painters, actors, conductors, musicians, clothing designers.

Like the judges in other cases, Devine cautioned that the decision was of limited precedential value because issues of exempt status are "intensely factbound and case specific."[35]

On appeal, the Monitor unsuccessfully challenged the validity of the 40-year-old DOL interpretations, suggesting that technological changes in the news industry undermine the pertinence of those interpretations. The three-judge panel of the 1st Circuit upheld Devine's decision that the interpretations were applicable and pointed out that once that decision was made, the finding that the journalists were non-exempt was inevitable.[36] While noting that the decision should not be read to mean all journalists are non-exempt and that "newspaper writing is certainly a medium capable of sustaining creativity," the appellate court also made it clear that "whether an employee is an exempt professional is independent of the title the employer ascribes to the position."[37]

In a case concerning a chain of small weekly papers, an appellate court ruled that the journalists clearly were not covered under the learned profession exemption and that the artistic exemption was not appropriate because journalists rely mostly on "intelligence, diligence and accuracy," not imagination, invention, or talent.[38] But that court noted that the work of a small paper--collecting information for listings, attending meetings, and conducting routine interviews with officials--is different from "the type of fact gathering that demands the skill or expertise of an investigative journalist for the Philadelphia Inquirer or Washington Post, or a bureau chief for the New York Times."[39]

The two recent decisions about broadcast media produced similar results. In 1988 U.S. District Judge Sidney A. Fitzwater ruled that a Texas television station's reporters, producers and directors were not professionals under the FLSA and that the station must pay them overtime.[40] He first dismissed the learned profession exemption, noting that no formal course of study is required and that journalists' careers follow a path more akin to "an apprenticeship and ... training" rather than "intellectual instruction and study."[41]

The judge said the work of none of the three types of employees met the criteria of original and creative work that relies mainly on invention, imagination or talent for the artistic exemption. For example, in discussing producers, Fitzwater wrote, "There is some testimony that a talented producer can weave a newscast in a particularly pleasing manner and can add 'bell and whistles' that differentiate one newscast from another," but that such work did not primarily involve invention, imagination or talent.[42] Fitzwater also ruled that producers, directors and assignment editors do not come under the administrative or executive exemptions. The station's appeal was unsuccessful, with a three-judge Circuit panel upholding the District judge on all matters.[43]

The other broadcast case concerned employees for NBC's network news operation and one of its owned-and-operated stations. In this case, NBC paid overtime, but at issue was the formula for determining the base salary, and employees argued that the FLSA was controlling. A U.S. magistrate judge ruled that none of the three plaintiffs--an NBC Nightly News writer, a Weekend News producer, and a field producer for the O&O--were exempt.[44] After rejecting the notion that the learned professional exemption applied, U.S. Magistrate Judge Kathleen Roberts ruled that the employees also were not artistic professionals, describing their work as "functional in nature" and depending "primarily upon acquired skill and experience and does not depend to a sufficient extent upon invention, imagination or talent."[45]

Roberts also reflected on the irony of each side's arguments:

> The testimony on both sides was frequently crafted (one is tempted to say "scripted") to conform to the language of the regulations, interpretations and court decisions that each side perceived to be supportive of its position. ... This testimony tended to throw into sharp relief the remarkably ironic nature of this lawsuit, in which writers and producers at the pinnacle of accomplishment and prestige in broadcast journalism, in order to increase their renumeration, present themselves as simple writers, editors and reporters, who are forced to fit the news into the rigid molds imposed upon them by their employer; while NBC extols the plaintiffs as "the best and the brightest" in the country, but argues that they are therefore too creative, talented, and independent to merit increased pay.[46]

PART III: SHERWOOD V. WASHINGTON POST

In 1986, 99 Washington Post reporters, editors, photographers and copy aides (the list of plaintiffs was reduced to 13 and then eventually to just Sherwood) filed suit in an attempt to reverse the paper's policy of paying overtime only to employees who make less than a specified amount per week.[47] The complaint first came before the late U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell, who granted summary judgment to the Post.[48] That decision was overturned[49] and sent back for a trial before Judge Norma Holloway Johnson, who also ruled for the Post, declaring Sherwood to be an artistic professional.[50] While Gesell's decision was overturned and has no precedential value, I will focus considerable attention on it because of his discussion of journalistic objectivity.

Johnson explicitly rejected the authority of the DOL interpretations, ruling that the news business had changed significantly since the 1940s. Gone are the days when "leg men" gathered facts and called them into "rewrite men," who wrote the stories. While those older reporting jobs did not require "invention, imagination, and talent," Sherwood's job did, Johnson ruled. Following Gesell's ruling, Johnson concluded the interpretations were "useful, guides, nothing more" that should be accorded very little weight.[51]

In labeling Sherwood--who during the period in question covered Virginia politics, the DC government, and the vice presidential campaign--an artistic professional, Johnson stressed Sherwood's talent for cultivating sources and identifying important stories. He wrote with creativity and imagination to produce the "artful" stories the Post expected, Johnson ruled. Sherwood had testified that his primary duty was to gather facts, but:

> The Court finds that Sherwood's job did require him to gather facts, but that fact gathering was only one aspect of his duty as a reporter. Sherwood's job also required him to originate story ideas, piece together seemingly unrelated facts, analyze facts and circumstances, and present his news stories in an engaging style. The Court further finds that Sherwood's fact gathering involved more than passively writing down what others told him. He was required to cultivate sources, utilize his imagination and other skills in seeking information, and continually developing his finely tuned interview skills.[52]

In short, Johnson ruled, Sherwood "was not a robot run by his editors."[53]

Gesell also had found that the Post employees qualified for exemption as artistic professionals, calling journalists "semi-specialists"[54] whose jobs require "talent and superior intellectual ability."[55] While acknowledging that some reporting of "straight, quick, factual news" did not require "the full range of talent" of journalists,[56] Gesell concluded that the primary work of Post journalists is professional. He wrote:

> They produce original and creative writing of high quality within the meaning of the regulations; they are thoroughly trained before employment; their performance as writers is individual, interpretative and analytical both in the writing itself and in the process by which the writing must be prepared; and their performance is measured and paid accordingly. A special talent is necessary to succeed.[57]

Gesell noted in a footnote that readers of the Post often claim journalists include editorial comments in their stories, and added:

> Without venturing an opinion as to the accuracy of this suggestion, the Court notes that if the stories seem that way it is either because of the writer's skill or because the writer has lapsed into being an editorial writer. In either event, this reaction of readers tends to reinforce the view that such writers are professionals within the meaning of the statute.[58]

During hearings in the case, Gesell had been more forthright in such views about journalists and what they do, expressing surprise when Sherwood's attorney argued that the Post was not a "journal of opinion." Gesell said:

> It seemed to me that almost every news article is an opinion article rather than a fact article. If you read the front page of the Washington Post you're not getting facts. You're being told what these different by-liners believe from these mysterious people [anonymous sources] that they never tell you about. ... Well, I've been reading that rag for a long time and I've come a little to feel that there is a certain amount of editorializing on the front page.[59]

Drawing an analogy to the way in which judges' personal views affect application of law, Gesell pushed this point in a discussion during the hearing with Robert Paul, an attorney for the journalists.

> GESELL: Mr. [Former Post editor Ben] Bradlee ought to know better than to say that [journalists] don't inject themselves into the article. That's exactly what he wants when he runs his paper. He wants them to bring their expertise forward so they know what is a fact and what isn't a fact.
>
> PAUL: But they write about facts.
>
> GESELL: Their selection of them.
>
> PAUL: But they are facts.
>
> GESELL: You know, this is not a subject of debate. It's a matter of impression and semantics.[60]

Paul pointed out that the Post does tag some stories as "news analysis," but Gesell insisted that other stories are not free of the same kind of analysis and interpretation, noting that some stories in the Style section (known for its in-depth profiles) employ "a sort of psychoanalytical type of semi-therapeutic questioning."[61]

Gesell explicitly brings the question of objectivity into the discussion of journalistic professionalism, but this hardly helps clear up the issue. Owners and working journalists alike claim an allegiance to some notion of objectivity, generally understood as fairness, non-partisanship, and an honest search for the facts of the matter. Gesell suggests that because there is much subjectivity in news production, journalists are professionals because their work is therefore creative, hence artistic in some sense. Owners, while grateful for his ruling, can't fully endorse his observations about objectivity and still hold to their definition of news and conventions of news gathering. Journalists, as evidenced in Paul's comments, end up defending a simplistic notion of objectivity--"just the facts"--to try to distance themselves from the artistic professional label.

Gesell's framing of the objectivity question obscures more than it reveals. By giving voice to a common complaint about journalists--that they have hidden agendas and distort the news to fit those agendas--Gesell misunderstands the issue in the same way as most contemporary journalists. Gesell says that there are some hard news stories but that some of the _Post_'s reporting strays into editorializing. This position holds onto the notion that there are hard facts, independent of human methods of acquiring them, which are the basis for some stories. Like many, Gesell wrongly focuses the question of objectivity and subjectivity on the actions of individual journalists, on how they use "artistic" skills to manipulate the news.[62]

The issue of objectivity is not helpful in resolving the FLSA exemption issue. Most journalists make good-faith efforts not to let their personal bias skew the news in blatant ways, even if they routinely fail at the task. But as more than two decades of critical scholarship has made clear, the news is biased at a deeper level, in the way in which the industry as a whole defines news and institutionalizes certain news-gathering procedures.[63] If the definition of artistic professional is one who strays from standard notions of objectivity that are commonly used in news gathering, then all journalists are artistic professionals because that notion of objectivity is bankrupt. Gesell touches a raw nerve for workers and owners in pursuing this line of questioning, because the entire industry has long agreed to rely on an intellectually untenable objectivity defense when it faces questions about its performance from news sources and the public. While Gesell's opinionated banter and forthright decisions are refreshing, they aren't ultimately productive.

PART IV: REJECTING PROFESSIONALIZATION

Before addressing a way to reshape and resolve the FLSA debate, some basic observations about professionalism in journalism and in society at large are necessary.

So far, I have focused on the ramifications of professionalization for worker-owner relations in the news industry, but issues concerning the industry's relationship with the public are also crucial. Journalism's efforts to professionalize go back to the early 19th century, when the economic base of newspapers moved from political patronage (where objectivity was not a concern) to a wider market (where objectivity became one way to sell more papers to more people). In the early 1920s, educators and journalists banded together to draw up ethical codes and rules for standardized practices, and while there were differences over how far this project should go, many seemed to unite around the idea that professional status would be "the best method of improving the reputation and dignity of journalism."[64]

Unlike other occupations in which practitioners sought professional status for their own benefit, the professionalization of journalism was undertaken primarily for the benefit of owners. For example, the motive of newspaper owner Joseph Pulitzer, one of the key people in the early call for professionalism, was not improving the life of the professional journalist but "elevating the prestige of journalism through its working members rather than on their behalf."[65]

The professionalization of journalism, then, did not arise from journalists striving for professional-style autonomy. As Birkhead points out, "What occurred in the name of professionalism primarily involved the legitimation of the press as a corporate or business institution."[66] Professionalism was a tool for management to use in controlling journalists. A professional practitioner was one who adhered to the system of defining, gathering, and writing news.[67]

As Kaul points out, professional ideology accommodates journalists' status ambitions but undercuts their economic interests (partly by making it harder to unionize journalists):

> The "rise" of the journalist into the so-called professional ranks was accompanied by a "conversion downward" into a technical white-collar proletariat. ... Proletarian journalists' assertions of professionalism obscured their economic exploitation. "Independence," "objectivity" and "social responsibility" were merely ideological corollaries of commercial strategies deployed to stabilize marketplace crises and class conflicts within journalism.[68]

With that background sketched, I move to a discussion of what the term "professional" means in society, beyond the narrow question of the FLSA definition. Following the critical sociologists,[69] the goal is not to identify the traits of the established professions (such as law and medicine) and then determine if an occupation "is" a profession. More important is the task of understanding the role of the professions in the organization of work, and distribution of power. According to Larson; professionalization:

> results in translating one order of scarce resources (expertise created through standardized training and testing at the higher levels of the formal education system) into another (market opportunities, work privileges, social status or bureaucratic rank). "Profession" is thus a name we give to historically specific forms that establish structural links between

> relatively high levels of formal education and relatively desirable positions and/or rewards in the social division of labor.[70]

In this sense, journalism clearly has not professionalized; no mechanisms--such as standardized training, testing, or licensing--are used to control access to the rewards of holding a professional position. Journalism does not practice the "credentialism" that makes for an effective labor-market shelter.[71] When an occupation is a profession in this sense, one defining characteristic, according to Freidson, is autonomy: "the freedom to employ discretion in performing work in the light of personal, presumably schooled judgment that is not available to those without the same qualifications."[72] In these terms, contemporary journalists working at mainstream news outlets are not professionals but technicians, defined by Freidson as "practitioners divorced from policy determination--particularly those whose work is amenable to formal structuring."[73] Owners of news media outlets treat the majority of journalistic employees as technicians; while papers and broadcast stations allow journalists varying levels of discretion, and at times the news-gathering process is actually collaborative, journalists clearly do not have professional autonomy.

In another sense, however, the label "profession" marks a more general kind of status in society. Abbott observes:

> People don't want to call automobile repair a profession because they don't want to accord it that dignity. This unwillingness probably has less to do with the actual characteristics of automobile repair as an intellectual discipline--which are conceptually quite close to those of medicine--than it does with the status of the work and of those who do it.[74]

In this sense, journalists generally are regarded--both by themselves and the public--as professionals. Working journalists tend to, as the author of a trade-press article put it, "think of themselves as more professional than proletarian. ... Their work is creative, their clothes are clean, and they are on a first-name basis with prominent politicians."[75] This is the "professional orientation" that McLeod and Hawley found present in their survey of journalists.[76] The effect of this type of professionalization is a widening of the gap between journalists and the "ordinary" people who read and watch news; professional status of this sort can be seen as a "fusion of practical ability and moral superiority," where the expert appears to be "more a person than most others."[77]

In this sense, the successful professionalization of journalism has had negative implications for readers. James Carey has argued that one of the great dangers in modern journalism is a professional orientation to an audience:

> the belief, usually implicit, that the audience is there to be informed, to be educated, to be filled with the vital information and knowledge whose nature, production and control rests with a professional class. This knowledge is defined, identified, presented based upon the canons of professional expertise over which the audience exercises no real judgment or control.[78]

In the role of transmitter of news, the journalist has less hope of being an independent observer and critic, and becomes a translator of the specialized language of institutions (government, science, business, etc.) into more common parlance. Carey argues that journalistic professionalism, tied to the conventions of objective reporting, turns the journalist into a professional communicator, "a relatively passive link in a communication chain that records the passing scene for audiences."[79]

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on Carey's argument, such questions about professionalism are important in understanding the current crisis in community life and crisis in democracy in the United States. As journalists have become professional communicators, citizens have become consumers. Journalists become part of the elite expert class that transmits knowledge, solutions, rules to ordinary people, who only vote on which group enforces the rules.[80]

At this point, as I begin to make some normative claims, I need to summarize some assertions to avoid confusion about the definition of "professionalism/ization":

1. In the sense that professionalism is about the use of credentialism to produce a labor-market shelter, journalism is not a profession and should never attempt to become one.

2. In the sense that professionalism means autonomy for workers to control their own work, journalists are not professional. They (and all workers, for that matter) should seek such autonomy but through organizing, not attempting to take on some of the trappings of a traditional profession.

3. In the sense that professionalism is about achieving a certain status for workers that sets them off from other citizens, journalists in the 20th century have become more professional, and that is a bad thing.

From those assertions, I return to the question of overtime pay and an argument for why journalists should be paid overtime.

One reason the news industry has been so profitable is that journalists have never been paid as well as other workers with similar education and skills. Low salaries for journalists have long been accepted; one of the key missions of journalism schools, in fact, has been to socialize students to accept inadequate compensation because, students are told, they will be helping keep democracy strong and protecting the First Amendment.

Journalism often is seen as a calling rather than an ordinary job. A Concord Monitor reporter reflected on this during her testimony at the trial:

> [M]y attitude was that you were supposed to work very hard and produce very good results, and not care very much about how much money you got, or how much overtime you got. ... I believed them, to some extent, in that I cared very much about my work, and at that young age I didn't care very much at all about my salary, and I was proud that I didn't care about my salary, because I could have had high paying jobs.[81]

Part of the struggle for a fairer share of profits for workers must be on the union front, although the immediate future for organizing beyond the existing union shops looks bleak.[82] Keeping the legal right to overtime pay, and pressing owners to follow the law, is also important. However, if journalists continue to press their case for overtime pay as non-professionals on the legal front yet claim professional status in some sense in other arenas, they will continue to appear as hypocritical as owners in the use of strategic, but unprincipled, rationalizations for their position.

I argue that journalists should refuse to play the professionalization game and actively reject professional status. Journalists should instead conceptualize themselves more clearly as workers in struggle with capital (a political argument that could be adapted to fit some other professions as well). This kind of de-professionalization should be coupled with efforts to bargain not only for increased wages and fringe benefits, but also for a more active voice and real power in policy making and newsroom decision making.[83] The public would be better served by working journalists who had more autonomy from owners and were less tied to news-gathering conventions that have become associated with professionalism. The key is achieving the autonomy through greater democracy in the workplace and a more honestly politicized role in society, not through the elitism of professionalization.

While such a stance would mean radical change for U.S. newsrooms, and in the current climate is unlikely to happen, there is precedent for such a stance. The Newspaper Guild actively pursued such newsroom democracy goals in the 1970s, adopting a model contract that included explicit provisions concerning:

1. employee VOICE in selection of supervisors, representation on editorial boards and committees dealing with news issues.
2. protection of employee INTEGRITY through use of bylines, assignment of work, presentation of material and defense of work product, and the right to respond to criticism or refuse to do unethical work.
3. employee PRIVILEGE against forced disclosure of news sources and indemnification of employees refusing to

disclose sources.[84]

While there was some success with the Integrity and Privilege planks, the Voice plank has rarely found its way into contracts.

The Guild approach could be seen as an attempt to further the professionalization project by giving increased professional autonomy to working journalists; Barwis suggests that the contract planks are "all integral parts of a reporter's professionalism."[85] I argue that journalists should pursue these goals not in tandem with claims to professionalism, but as a rejection of professionalism and with a renewed claim to simple workers' rights, in essence a quest for a functioning socialist democracy in the newsroom.[86] In such a newsroom, journalistic workers could identify not as an elite class of professionalized communicators but as active participants in the discussion of public issues. Instead of claiming a professional allegiance to distinctive practices and a moral code apart from public--practices and codes that cover up the inherently political nature of their work with the pretense of neutrality--journalists could reconnect to the public they serve in the hopes of becoming something more than "stenographers to power."[87]

Such efforts are crucial, although perhaps difficult to imagine in a time of fading worker power. But such vision is necessary.

NOTES:

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1 29 U.S.C. $201-219 (1988). The minimum wage provisions are in $206 and the overtime provisions are in $207.

2 Peter D. DeChiara, "Rethinking the Managerial-Professional Exemption of the Fair Labor Standards Act," American University Law Review, 43:1 (Fall 1993): 147.

3 Jacob Freeman v. National Broadcasting Co., Inc., 846 F.Supp. 1109, 1112 (S.D.N.Y. 1993).

4 29 U.S.C. $213(a)(1).

5 29 U.S.C. $213(a)(8).

6 29 U.S.C. $213(b)(9).

7 Mabee v. White Plains Publishing, 327 U.S. 178 (1946); Oklahoma Press Publishing Co. v. Walling, 327 U.S. 186 (1946).

8 Reich v. Gateway Press Inc., 22 Med.L.Rptr. 1257, 13 F.3d 685 (3rd Cir. 1994). The court held that "businesses that engage in related activities, under unified operation or common control, and for a common business purpose constitute an enterprise and will be treated as a single entity for purposes of applying the FLSA," at 1258. So, journalists at Gateway Press' 19 papers in the Pittsburgh suburbs, including the six that had individual circulations of under 4,000, were ruled eligible for mandated overtime pay.

9 For convenience, from this point on this group will be referred to simply as "journalists" and includes news and

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feature reporters (but not columnists or specialty writers), front-line editors who are not considered management, and working photographers at newspapers. The law also applies to people doing comparable work at broadcast stations, such as reporters, field producers, newswriters, and videographers.

10 A brief note about real-world practices: As most journalists know, such clear precedents have not meant that all papers and broadcast stations have paid overtime to reporters who work overtime. Media outlets, especially smaller operations, often ignore such law (or perhaps are not even aware of it) and journalists are not always aware that the law covers them. Much of the employees' grumbling about long hours and inadequate compensation never leaves the newsroom. Because employees must take action to initiate complaints, most of the news industry's FLSA violations go undetected and unpunished.

11 29 C.F.R. $541.2.

12 In *Ricci v. El Mundo Inc.*, 85 F.Supp. 82 (D.P.R. 1949) the first assistant to the editor in chief was exempt as an administrative employee. In *Adams v. St. Johns River Shipbuilding Co.*, 69 F.Supp. 989 (S.D.Fla.), rev'd on other grounds, 164 F.2d 1012 (5th Cir. 1947); and *Donovan v. Reno Builders Exch., Inc.*, 26 Wage & Hour Cas. (BNA) 1234, 1984 WL 3149 (D.Nev. 1984) editors of company and trade periodicals were exempt as administrative employees because of the broad responsibilities they had for overall make-up of the publication.

13 Other government agencies have wrestled with this question in different arenas. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) also has had to determine the professional status of reporters when newspapers have sought to force self-determination elections for a variety of editorial employees. If deemed professional, employees would vote in separate elections from non-professional employees. The NLRB has refused to grant journalists professional status, although it has described journalism as a "calling" and said that journalists do carry with them "professional pride." *The Express-News Corporation and San Antonio Typographical Union #172, Petitioner*, 223 NLRB 627, 631 (1976). See also *Jersey Publishing Company, Employer, and Hudson County Newspaper Guild*, 76 NLRB 467 (1948), and *Binghamton Press Company Inc. and Binghamton Typographical Union No. 232*, 226 NLRB 808 (1976).

The Immigration and Naturalization Service, has determined that reporters are professionals [*Matter of Perez*, 12 I&N Dec. 701 (1968); and *Matter of Shin*, 11 I&N Dec. 686 (1966)], one category for gaining preference under federal immigration law [8 U.S.C.S $1101(a)(32) and 8 U.S.C.S. $1153(a)(3)].

In state court, a free-lance journalist failed in his

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attempt to seek relief from the city's unincorporated business tax under the professional exemption [Frye v. Commissioner of Finance of the City of New York, 466 N.Y.S.2d 3, 6 (Supreme Court, Appellate Division, 1983). judgment affirmed, 477 N.Y.S.2d 611, 466 N.E.2d 151 (Court of Appeals, 1984)].

14 In Skidmore et al v. Swift & Co., 323 U.S. 134, 140 (1944), the Supreme Court gave endorsement to the Department of Labor's interpretations of the FLSA. While not controlling on the courts, the Department's interpretations and opinions "do constitute a body of experience and informed judgment to which courts and litigants may properly resort for guidance."

15 29 C.F.R. 541.3(a)(1).

16 29 C.F.R. 541.302(d).

17 29 C.F.R. 541.3(a)(2).

18 29 C.F.R. 541.303(f)(2).

19 29 C.F.R. 541.303(f)(1).

20 Sun Publishing Co. v. Walling, 140 F.2d 445, 449 (6th Cir. 1944), cert. denied, 322 U.S. 728 (1944).

21 Mabee v. White Plains Publishing Co. Inc., 327 U.S. 178 (1946). In this case the Court followed its reasoning in Grosjean v. American Press Co., 297 U.S. 233 (1936), stating that such regulation that did not discriminate against the press was constitutional.

22 Newspaper Guild v. Republican Publishing Co., 8 WH Cases 140 (D. Mass. 1948).

23 Mitchell v. Kickapoo Prairie Broadcasting, 182 F.Supp. 578 (W.D. Mo. 1960), aff'd in part and rev'd in part on other grounds, 288 F.2d (8th Cir. 1961).

24 Lewis v. News World Communications Inc., Labor Relations Cases (CCH) #34,992. (D.D.C. 1987).

25 Mandelaris v. McGraw-Hill Broadcasting Co., 20 Med.L.Rptr. 1953, 1956 (E.D.Calif. 1992).

26 Nordquist v. McGraw-Hill Broadcasting Co., 38 Cal.Rptr.2d 221 (Cal. Ct. App. 1995). Brian Nordquist was ruled not exempt as an artistic professional or administrative employee as sports director/anchor. The court noted that different facts could produce different decisions in similar cases. Also, both cases were based on California, not federal, labor law, and hence have no precedential value in FSLA actions.

27 As of this writing, no action had been taken on the proposal.

28 American Newspaper Publishers Association, "Comments of ANPA in Response to Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking," March 21, 1986, 27. On file with author.

29 Ibid., 26.

30 Cited in Plaintiff's Post Trial Brief, Brock v. Newspapers of New England Inc., (D.N.H., Civil File No. 81-298-D), 17. On file with author.

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31 Ibid., 19.

32 On appeal, the First Circuit panel noted the inexplicable delay between the trial and decision, but ruled that the delay did not constitute reversible error. *Reich v. Newspapers of New England, Inc.*, 23 Med.L.Rptr. 1257, 1260 (1st Cir. 1995).

33 *Reich v. Newspapers of New England, Inc.*, 834 F.Supp. 530 (D.N.H. 1993). Devine limited the reporters to claims within the two-year statute of limitations, ruling the paper's violation was not willful. But he did award liquidated damages because the paper didn't act in good faith.

34 Ibid., 536.

35 Ibid., 532.

36 *Reich v. Newspapers of New England, Inc.*, 23 Med.L.Rptr. 1257, 1261 (1st Cir. 1995).

37 Ibid., 1267.

38 *Reich v. Gateway Press Inc.*, 22 Med.L.Rptr. 1257, 1270 (3rd Cir. 1994).

39 Ibid., 1270.

40 *Dalheim v. KDFW-TV*, 15 Med.L.Rptr. 2393, 706 F.Supp. 493 (N.D. Tex. 1988). The same judge later denied plaintiff's request for liquidated damages and prejudgment interest, finding that KDFW acted in good faith and upon reasonable grounds. *Dalheim v. KDFW-TV*, 712 F.Supp. 533 (N.D. Tex. 1989).

41 *Dalheim v. KDFW-TV*, 15 Med.L.Rptr. 2393, 2399 (N.D. Tex. 1988).

42 Ibid., 2403.

43 *Dalheim v. KDFW-TV,* 18 Med.L.Rptr. 1657 (5th Cir. 1990).

44 *Freeman v. National Broadcasting Co., Inc.*, 846 F.Supp. 1109 (S.D.N.Y. 1993).

45 Ibid., 1157.

46 Ibid., 1123.

47 That figure was $740 at the time the suit was filed and was increased by the company to $810 in 1987.

48 *Sherwood v. The Washington Post*, 15 Med. L. Rptr. 1692, 677 F.Supp. 9 (D.D.C. 1988).

49 *Sherwood v. The Washington Post*, 16 Med. L. Rptr. 1665, 871 F.2d 1144 (D.C. Cir. 1989). The appellate court ruled that because Gesell faced a genuine issue of material fact, summary judgment was inappropriate and reversed and remanded for trial without commenting on the merits of the case.

50 *Sherwood v. The Washington Post*, 23 Med.L.Rptr. 1273 (D.D.C. 1994).

51 Ibid., 1282.

52 Ibid, 1275.

53 Ibid., 1283.

54 *Sherwood v. The Washington Post*, 15 Med.L.Rptr. 1692,

1694 (D.D.C. 1988).

55 Ibid., 1695.

56 Ibid., 1697.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Sherwood v. The Washington Post, transcript of hearing, December 10, 1987, 20-21. On file with author.

60 Ibid., 34-35.

61 Ibid., 37.

62 See Robert A. Hackett, "Decline of a Paradigm? Bias and Objectivity in News Media Studies," Critical Studies in Mass Communications 1:3 (September 1984):229-259; and James S. Ettema, "Journalism in the 'Post-Factual' Age," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 4:1 (1987):82-86.

63 Selected highlights include: Gaye Tuchman, Making News (New York: Free Press, 1978); Mark Fishman, Manufacturing the News (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Todd Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

64 Clifford G. Christians, Quentin J. Schultze, and Norman H. Sims, "Community, Epistemology and Mass Media Ethics," Journalism History 5 (Summer 1978):39.

65 Douglas Birkhead, "Presenting the Press: Journalism and the Professional Project," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1982), 250.

66 Douglas Birkhead, "News Media Ethics and the Management of Professionals," Journal of Mass Media Ethics 1:2 (Spring/Summer 1986):39.

67 Ibid., 40.

68 Arthur J. Kaul, "The Proletarian Journalist: A Critique of Professionalism,' Journal of Mass Media Ethics 1:2 (Spring/Summer 1986):53.

69 See, for example, Terence J. Johnson, Professions and Power (London: MacMillan, 1972); and Magali Sarfatti Larson, The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

70 Magali Sarfatti Larson, "In the Matter of Experts and Professionals, or How Impossible It Is to Leave Nothing Unsaid," in The Formation of Professions, ed. Rolf Torstendahl and Michael Burrage (London: Sage, 1990), 30.

71 Freidson points out that in the extreme, credentialism creates "an occupational cartel, which gains and preserves monopolistic control over the supply of a good or service in order to enhance the income of its members by protecting them from competition by others." Eliot Freidson, Professional Powers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 63.

72 Ibid., 141.

73 Ibid., 229.

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74 Andrew Abbott, The System of Professions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 8.

75 Daniel Lazare, "State of the Union," Columbia Journalism Review, Jan./Feb. 1989, 44.

76 Jack M. McLeod and Searle E. Hawley Jr., "Professionalization Among Newsmen," Journalism Quarterly 41 (1964):529-539.

77 Larson, The Rise of Professionalism, 225.

78 James W. Carey, "AEJ Presidential Address: A Plea for the University Tradition," Journalism Quarterly 55:4 (Winter 1978):853.

79 James W. Carey, "The Communications Revolution and the Professional Communicator," in The Sociological Review, ed. Paul Halmos, 13 (January 1969):33.

80 See Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, and Noam Chomsky, Necessary Illusions (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

81 Cited in Plaintiff's Post Trial Brief, Brock v. Newspapers of New England Inc., (D.N.H., Civil File No. 81-298-D), 19. On file with author.

82 See Aaron Bernstein, "Why American Needs Unions," Business Week, May 23, 1994, 70-82; and Patricia Cayo Sexton, The War on Labor and the Left (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991).

83 This should not be confused with contemporary management fads such as Total Quality Management (TQM), which often create structures for employee input, but rarely redistribute real power in an organization.

84 Gail Lund Barwis, "Contractual Agreements in Newsroom Democracy," in With Just Cause: Unionization of the American Journalist, ed. Walter M. Brasch (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 367-382. See also her "Contractual Newsroom Democracy," Journalism Monographs 57 (August 1978).

85 Barwis, "Contractual Agreements in Newsroom Democracy," 378.

86 For a lucid explanation of how such a workplace would function, see Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century (Boston: South End Press, 1991).

87 I take the phrase from David Barsamian, Stenographers to Power: Media and Propaganda (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992).

Love, Gender and Television News

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It was covered in the media from Great Britain to South Korea. The latest fighting in Bosnia? A new twist on the Middle East peace plan? No, it was a marriage proposal -- a proposal made before tens of thousands of people. It took place September 9, 1993, on KCNC-TV, the NBC-owned and operated station in Denver, Colorado. During the 5:00 pm newscast, the station's legal correspondent ended a report analyzing issues in a Pepsi tampering case, turned to the anchor and proposed marriage.

This case is of particular interest on several different levels. It draws attention to changing definitions of news values, particularly in local news. Something so personal and seemingly impertinent to viewers would not have fit into the traditional paradigms of what makes news. Yet the proposal was defended as being a very legitimate addition to this day's newscast.

On another level, the proposal may illustrate some of the gender issues pervasive in television today. The anchor involved, Aimee Sporer, had been on the air at KCNC a little more than a year at the time of the proposal. The legal correspondent, Dan Caplis, is a local attorney-turned-TV reporter. The on-air proposal raises questions about credibility, power and traditional gender roles. What messages did the proposal send to the audience about the role of an anchor woman in the context of reporting the daily news? And how does this event fit into the larger context of gender in the media?

Because of the response the on-air proposal elicited, some consideration should be given to the audience's perceived relationship with television anchors. Several hundred viewers wrote in to voice their approval, many others called to give encouragement to the couple and to the station for allowing Caplis to propose on the air. The overwhelming reaction may tell us something about the parasocial relationship between the audience and the anchor people they watch each day.

For purposes of this study, we employed several different methodological techniques to examine the issues surrounding the on-air proposal. We performed a textual analysis, examining both the discursive and non-discursive elements of the proposal itself.

In order to better understand the context of the proposal, we also conducted interviews with Sporer and Caplis and with KCNC's general manager, Roger Ogden, who gave the final permission for the proposal to occur on-air. Each interview was conducted individually, using generally the same set of open-ended questions.

So we could begin to analyze what the audience reaction might have been, we also examined a selection of 20 out of about 250 letters received by the station or by Sporer and Caplis after the proposal. This was not intended as a representative sample of the letters received, nor are we trying to generalize about the feelings of the overall audience. Yet some common themes do emerge in the letters that may add to our understanding of audience response to this event.

We are attempting to analyze the proposal in three different ways. First we look at the context (events surrounding the proposal) in light of news values and how they appear to be changing. Next we look at the text itself (the on-air proposal), and use feminist theory as a starting point for analysis. Finally, we examine the audience response (the viewers' mail), and what this might tell us about viewers' parasocial relationships with newscasters.

Context/News Values

What makes news is one of the basic concepts taught in beginning journalism classes. Though the definition may have never been universal, the traditional parameters have been expanding in recent years.

A lot of considerations go into what makes a newscast. Producers are expected to lead with a story that has impact and interest for the viewer, then order the rest of the newscast based on the merits of the individual stories and common bonds between stories.

When KCNC General Manager Roger Ogden agreed to allow Dan Caplis to propose on the air, the terms he decreed made the proposal itself an element to be produced into the newscast: it could not be the lead story, it had to be in a "legitimate setting" and it had to happen relatively quickly. (It actually lasted a minute and a half and ran about 20-25 minutes into the newscast, right before weather.)

Reflecting on the proposal later, Ogden critiqued the on-air execution of it in terms of what he called a production issue. "I might have advised Dan to not fumble around in his pocket for 20 seconds trying to find the (ring) box," he says, laughing. "It wasted a lot of air time! The guy is usually pretty smooth and self-confident; he didn't come off that way on the air."

Ogden's initial concern of the time the proposal would take also led to its placement in the hour-long 5:00 p.m. newscast rather than the 35-minute 10:00 p.m. news. He says he was concerned about how the proposal would be perceived by viewers in terms of the other stories that couldn't be included in the newscast because of it.

As to his concern about the "legitimate setting" within the newscast, one might wonder if that criterion was met. Caplis was on the set in his role as KCNC's legal expert, and the story he was analyzing was a serious issue -- whether a Pepsi tampering case would be tried in federal or state court. To many observers, the transition from that to a marriage proposal seemed abrupt.

Aimee Sporer admitted feeling uncomfortable with the setting from the beginning. Because they were dating, producers would normally assign Caplis to sit on the other side of the set, with the other anchor. Sporer was confused, as is obvious from her reaction on-camera, when she thanked him for his report and he said he had more to say. "I thought...there was a question that I ought to have asked that I didn't ask, and I almost felt like maybe he was reprimanding me," she says. As he started talking in more personal terms, she looked at the camera with raised eyebrows and a slight smile, conveying her confusion to the audience. She says she started wondering if she was dreaming. "The strangest things go through your mind, but I almost thought we were not on the set. I mean, I kept thinking, this is not really the news."

Of course, it really was. And that was not the end of it. If the original intent was merely to allow time during the newscast for Caplis to propose, before long the proposal itself became news. Part of it was replayed at the end of the 5:00 p.m. news, and it aired on KCNC newscasts for the next 24 hours. It even became part of the promotional news teases the station runs during the evening to encourage viewers to watch the 10:00 p.m. news. And the next day, reaction to the proposal was the lead story at 4:00 p.m., beating out for that distinction a murder/suicide at a housing complex for the elderly.

So did the proposal belong in the context of a newscast? The answer for Rocky Mountain News TV critic Dusty Saunders was a resounding "no":

> I've seen some embarrassing things on Denver television, but this takes the cake -- or the ring. Was this really part of a newscast on a highly rated, NBC-owned station that boasts of being Colorado's News Channel? Channel 4 president and general manager Roger Ogden should be ashamed.

Ogden says similar criticisms came from members of his own staff, specifically some men in the newsroom. "(They) thought it was a waste of our time, and that it was sort of a ratings-driven ploy to get attention for a new anchor." He admits he was aware that the proposal could have a positive effect on Sporer's image in the community, but he points out that it did not happen during a television ratings period.

> It occurred to me that this could come off as pretty contrived, self-promoting...you've got a new anchor, here's a way you can get some exposure for her, having her fiancé propose to her on the air. It could be perceived as something we cooked up as opposed to Dan coming to us. It just had the potential to have the smell of something contrived. Knowing that wasn't the case, I thought we would be successful telling people that it wasn't the case.

Ogden agreed to allow the proposal. While it's clear the proposal was not suggested by the station, Ogden did think it would add a positive image to the newscast. It's an issue he is acutely aware of, based on viewer complaints about too many negative images in news. He says negative stories are what defines news in a lot of ways, yet he says viewers are asking for more of a balance. "We're continuing to look very, very hard for ways that don't change the basic structure of the newscast yet allow us to weave a fabric of positive images through our newscasts," he says. And indeed, just weeks after this interview, KCNC announced a concerted campaign to make room in their newscasts for more positive news.

Complaints about negativity in news are not a recent development, nor is the trend by news organizations to seek more of a balance between positive and negative. A TV news assignment editor told a researcher in 1981, "Straight news is often so negative that material must be brought in that 'brightens up the world a bit'" (Turow, 1983).

Broadcasting students are often taught early on the value of balancing the good with the bad. A chapter on producing in one television journalism textbook put it this way:

> Typically, stories carry an 'emotional charge' that is either good, bad, or neutral, so most producers try to avoid strings of any given type of story within the newscast. They also strive to avoid a 'ping pong' story order, which results in a rapidly alternating series of good news-bad news-good news stories. For one thing, a long string of negative stories will leave viewers in an unhappy frame of mind. No one enjoys being subjected to an unending series of stories whose predominant emotional impact is negative. (Shook, 1989, p. 220)

Some researchers suggest part of the resistance to negative images lies in the nature of the television medium. English psychologist James Stephenson developed the play theory of mass communications (in Diamond). He posits that people consume television as part of their leisure hours, or play, rather than their work hours; therefore, it is for relaxation and fun, not something to be taken seriously. Using this analysis, media critic Edwin Diamond theorized that the television audience has to be fed with a sugar-coated pill, extra-strength at that, because "no one has ever trained the audience to ingest serious information from television" (Diamond, p. 93).

It was this same idea upon which Group W built the concept of PM Magazine in the late 1970s. PM Magazine was a hybrid of syndicated material and locally-generated stories that looked like a modified version of a newscast. But it was purposely designed to offer different fare from the standard newscast. In the PM Newsletter to stations running the program in 1981, Group W suggested that PM Magazine producers stay away from unpleasant topics:

"People watch our show as they are winding down from a hard day at work, after the hard news of the day is over. We want to remind them of what's positive and bright about life." (Turow, p. 116)

People who worked on a PM Magazine staff in a midwestern market told researcher Joseph Turow that their goal for the program was to be positive and friendly and that controversy simply did not fit into the program's approach.

While mainstream newscasts clearly tackle some controversy, Ogden's comments about the criticisms of negative news indicate a keen awareness of how the audience is accepting the messages sent out. The concept of how those messages may reflect back on the station sending them is as old as the story of Persian generals killing the messenger who delivered bad news. Stone and Beell (1975) found an audience forms less favorable opinions of a newscaster who delivers bad news rather than good. And their findings built on previous research which showed that "the sources and content of messages are evaluated in light of each other, and that attitudes toward a communicator are not maintained without reference to what he or she says and does." (Stone & Beell, p. 111)

Shook suggested much the same theory when advocating that student producers learn to strike a balance between positive and negative stories: "If the range of viewer emotions is predominantly negative, some viewers may tend to blame the anchors or the newscast itself." (Shook, p. 220)

For KCNC's Ogden, the viewer feedback that says news is too negative, along with the overwhelmingly positive response to the on-air proposal, was an important contrast. "What it said was we've got to find a way to more legitimately balance out the content of our shows... We need to be real creative about how we do this, but we've got to find some ways to do that, because this is a real issue for the people out there."

That attitude was reflected consistently throughout the letters viewers wrote in response to the proposal. The viewers found the proposal a refreshing change from the crime and violence they are used to seeing on television news. One viewer called it "a wonderful happening in a very troubled world." Another said, "You gave us a touch of badly needed Spring." Still another wrote, "Since when must reporters, who come into our homes every day with the usual doom and gloom, be prohibited from showing us a bit of themselves?"

Ogden anticipated the criticisms that the proposal did not belong as part of a newscast. But he saw it as consistent with his philosophy of news content, which he believes should be very broad, just as a newspaper's content is not all hard news.

Caplis and Sporer point out that the proposal shared air time with, among other things, the KCNC gardener highlighting a prize-winning vegetable garden. Sporer believes the proposal fit just as well with the news content as the garden segment. "If you're going to indict what local news has become, that's fine, and I think you can make an argument for that, but I don't think you can pick and choose," she says. She believes that the connection local news has to a particular community means it necessarily covers a wider variety of activities than a national newscast. "We're in a different form in the same medium," she says.

But the unique nature of local news did not keep this particular event from attracting national, and even international, coverage. The proposal was shown on television and written about in newspapers around the country and the world (see Appendix B). Even the venerable BBC found it newsworthy enough to call Sporer for an interview.

Roger Ogden is not surprised by the response. "The appetite for emotionally-moving material is higher than it's ever been. And it's not confined to this country, it's worldwide," he says.

Text/Women and News

From the time television news began in the United States, it was a male-dominated field. In fact, few women were hired to work in television news until well after two decades had passed, and even then the numbers remained small (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977, 1979). Only very recently has that changed, and yet the number of women in television news management positions remains small (Stone, 1993). The local news business was especially slow in putting women into anchor positions, which for viewers are the key positions when it comes to power and credibility. Even as women began to move into positions as anchors, they faced what could be seen as contradictory requirements. On one hand, they were expected to appear as calm, professional authority figures whom the audience could trust. Yet at the same time, they were often given the position only if they were young, attractive and deferential to the more mature male co-anchor. Thus, the traditional stereotypical characteristics of a woman could never be too far removed from her professional identity.

Gerbner (1993) studied ten years of television newscasts and found that women still comprise only 35% of the newscasters and reporters on the major networks. Ziegler and White (1990) suggested that because women and minorities are underrepresented in news, the audience is not getting an accurate reflection of society.

Fung (1988) discovered that women working at the networks represent a kind of underclass, where they are paid less, and where an unwritten double standard requires them to be younger and better looking than their male counterparts. Former network correspondent Marlene Sanders confirmed that "middle age was no asset" to her career (1988). And in interviews with others, including Walter Cronkite, Sanders found evidence that a double standard exists, granting men authority with age, but not affording women the same privilege. Gelfman (1976) also discovered in interviews with network anchors and correspondents that many believed appearance was more crucial to a woman's career than to a man's.

From a theoretical perspective Tuchman (1978) introduced the idea that the underrepresentation of women, along with the media's stereotypical images, can add up to the symbolic annihilation of women. In other words, the viewing public has, for years, seen women infrequently on television, and when women have been allowed on the air, it has often been in a subservient role. Women have often been seen only in the context of being a wife or mother, defined by their relationship to a husband or children. Others have suggested that reinforcement of traditional values through the media is one way hegemony operates in American society (Gitlin 1980, 1983; Tuchman; Gerbner, 1972).

Kuhn (1982) introduced the idea of recuperation for female characters in motion pictures. She observed that, when female characters are allowed some power or independence, it is temporary; they are eventually recuperated to their more subservient role, either through marriage or courtship, or they are directly punished or even killed for their transgressions. Although we are examining an actual event, and not a fictionalized account, there is enough similarity between news and film as genres to warrant the application of Kuhn's theory to the proposal.

News, like cinema, is a constructed narrative. Very careful attention is paid to the script, the blocking, the order of the narrative and the leading roles, those of the anchors. And in many senses, anchors are considered performers, just as actors are. As one TV critic put it, "The drive, sustained by market research, to present contemporary and believable figures demands that otherwise competent newsmen and women become performers in a kind of simulated sex show" (Diamond, 1978, p. 113). Long-time anchor Bill Bonds was clear on what was expected of him: "You have to forget all the writing, reporting, and editing talents that got you to the top when you get to the top. Instead, wink, smile, toss your curls, show the teeth" (Diamond).

As we examined the marriage proposal as a text, several themes seemed to reinforce the recuperation theory in this case. Aimee Sporer is one of a new generation of female anchors. On the air, they appear confident, intelligent and articulate. The image is of an independent, accomplished professional. If the theory of recuperation holds true, certain events may take place that undermine this image. We would argue that the proposal is just such an event, and the recuperation occurred in several different arenas.

On one level, an anchor team could be viewed as a representation of a family unit; the male and female anchors may be viewed as a husband and wife. In this scenario, if viewed as a traditional patriarchy, the male anchor would be the more credible authority. In one light, when Caplis asked Sporer on the air to marry him, she was recuperated to this type of role: no longer just an independent news anchor, but now a soon-to-be wife. Granted, audience members may have their own interpretation of anchor teams in general, and of this incident in particular, especially in an era when marriages may not reflect a traditional patriarchal power structure. This perception might have been strengthened if one anchor proposed to another anchor, who was perceived to have equal status. But this is not what happened in this case.

Caplis and Sporer were not co-anchors, and in fact, Sporer holds a higher status position as a primary anchor. However, there is something else to be considered. Sporer, like many other female news anchors, shares the news desk with male anchors who are older than she is. She is in her 20's, paired with Bill Stuart, who is in his 40's, and Bob Palmer, who is in his 60's. This trend of pairing an older male anchor with a younger female anchor has been shown to be common in many television markets (Fung). The perception of these teams may be closer to that of a father/daughter relationship than a husband and wife, and in at least one instance, this was the actual case (at KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh, a father and daughter did anchor together). This kind of age disparity may also serve to undermine the female anchor's credibility. Some of a female anchor's image as a strong, independent professional may be recuperated if she is perceived as being under the authority of a more mature and more experienced father-figure male anchor. In this case in particular, the marriage proposal may have served to reinforce this model. In the interview with Dan Caplis he indicated he was disappointed that Bob Palmer was not co-anchoring with Sporer the day of the proposal, because "Bob is a father figure" to Aimee. Caplis's imagery is not far off. Even as the proposal unfolded Sporer was sitting between her suitor (Caplis) and her co-anchor (Stuart), who might be perceived as a stand-in for the father of the bride. For a culture that still holds tight to remnants of the traditional concepts of a patriarchal family, and a traditional view of how love and romance are to unfold, the proposal provided a strong and resonant real-life narrative.

The way the proposal itself was carried out may also provide some evidence of an unequal power relationship. Most of what Caplis had to say during the actual proposal has little to do with Sporer. Caplis talked about what he liked about Sporer (see Appendix A). He talked about his life, about his parent, his friends, and his job. The only thing he says about Sporer is that she thinks of the audience as an extended family. It could be argued that Caplis sets himself up as a complete person, with a career, friends and family. But when he speaks of Sporer, it is only in regard to her relationship with viewers as her extended family. Caplis never mentions her professionalism or her journalistic ability. In this way, Sporer, like so many women before her, is placed in a context only where her worth is demonstrated through her familial relationships, in this case, with viewers. Finally, Caplis comments that the last year of his life has been the best one ever, and as a token of appreciation, he gives Sporer an engagement ring. This act again symbolically places Caplis in a position of power. Because Sporer has performed in a way that has made him happy, Caplis will now reward her with a marriage proposal. One could argue what Caplis is doing assumes that women would like to be rewarded with a marriage proposal: i.e., that women are waiting for the right man to come along to fulfill their lives.

After Sporer agreed to marry Caplis, they kissed. This act was seen by some viewers as a touching and "real life" moment. Yet again, it is Caplis who is in control. He initiates the kiss, he is the person who is symbolically in control of the moment. In fact, Sporer seems uncomfortable, perhaps embarrassed or aware of the broach of news decorum, and breaks off the kiss quickly. In this brief kiss, how is Sporer perceived? Some would argue it was just an innocent, human moment. But for this moment, she is no longer a news anchor, she no longer a journalist, she is no longer a professional person. She is recuperated to the role of fiancee' and is defined by her relationship with a man, not strictly on her own merits.

The way the proposal unfolded casts Caplis and Sporer in traditional roles in regard to romance. Caplis is the pursuer, Sporer is the pursued. Caplis makes the decision about when it is appropriate to get married, he decides when and where the proposal should take place. All of this is part of the sub-text of the proposal itself. For the audience, the event is filled with traditional messages about women and men, about love, romance, courtship and marriage. And it could be argued that Sporer, who otherwise is perceived as an independent career woman, is now recuperated into a more traditional, even stereotypical female role. Women on television have traditionally been housewives, mothers, or girlfriends, often without their own strong sense of self. Again, as images of independent women are subverted, this may contribute to what Tuchman termed women's symbolic annihilation.

Relationships often involve a power struggle between two people, whether or not part of a traditional patriarchal family. Given this, it is interesting to consider what the on-air proposal suggests about power in male/female relationships. In this case knowledge was power. Caplis knew the proposal was coming; the station's general manager and news director both were in on the decision to allow the proposal to take place, so they had prior knowledge and the power to veto the event. The producer of the newscast knew this was going to take place, as did co-anchor Bill Stuart. Caplis had asked Sporer's mother for her permission beforehand. He had told his parents in Chicago that he was going to propose, and had made arrangements for them to watch it live via satellite. (Their reaction was captured on videotape for later replay.) Word also got out beyond KCNC. At least one competing station had gotten word of the proposal before the 5:00 p.m. newscast went on the air. Caplis had notified both Denver daily newspapers in advance, in case they wanted to have photographers on hand (which they did). In fact, it appears the only principal person involved who had no knowledge of the plan was Aimee Sporer. General Manager Roger Ogden characterized it this way: "In some ways she's a victim here, I suppose. She was put on the spot without her knowledge, without her concurrence."

This raises the question, what if Sporer had wanted to say no? Or at the very least, "let's talk about it." The way the proposal was designed and executed, it appears that anything but a "yes" answer would have been most difficult. What this did in a very real way was to put Caplis in a position of power. He knew it would happen, he ensured the press was on hand, and he made his proposal on live television, all of which meant that in this situation, the power balance was tilting in his direction. Sporer did say yes, and was not unhappy about the way proposal unfolded, fortunately. But did she really have much choice? As Rocky Mountain News television critic Dusty Saunders wrote in a scathing column the day after the proposal :

> The script would have been much better if Sporer had tossed away the ring and declined the proposal, saying "No, you boob, what kind of silly show-biz trick is this? Get out of my face!" (Saunders, 1993)

In our interviews we asked all three of the principals what would have happened if the roles had been reversed, if Sporer had been the one who decided to propose to Caplis on the news instead. Sporer believed the station would not have prevented her from popping the question. "Oh, I don't think so," she said. "You'd have to ask them, and I might be naive in that, but I don't think so. I'd be kind of curious to know. Tell me what you find out!"

Caplis, on the other hand, felt sure the station would not have given Sporer permission to propose.

> I don't think so, no, I don't think so. She's too valuable a property. . .If she's the one proposing there's too much of a credibility risk because she is too important to them. You know, I was expendable, she is not.

It is interesting to note that Caplis frames his analysis of this in terms of commodities. He felt that he could take the risk because he was expendable -- the station could fire him, should anything go wrong. In fact he had explored other career options for just such a contingency. But Caplis described Sporer as "too valuable a property" for station management to take that same risk.

General Manager Roger Ogden said the questions involved if Sporer had wanted to do the proposing would have been different than for Caplis, not only because Sporer was the station's 5 and 10 o'clock anchor, but because of the gender issues involved.

> You don't normally expect women in our society, it's not generally the way it's been done historically...women don't propose to men, men propose to women. That may have potentially had a negative impact on the perception she has in the community. I'm not sure it's right, but we sure as hell would have had a significant discussion around that issue.

Ogden said he was pleased with the way the proposal did occur, and the way it impacted Sporer's image. "I think it humanized her, actually...it probably helped (her credibility)," he said. There apparently was not any fear that the proposal, as it occurred, would hurt Sporer's image as a strong and independent female. But had Sporer been the one to do the proposing, the context changes, and the station managers would have considered a different set of criteria before they granted permission. In other words, it seemed less risky for the station's primary female anchor to be proposed to rather than do the proposing. Again, this seems strong evidence that as long as Sporer could be framed in a traditional female role, things were safe. But when considering whether she might be able to take a bit of an unconventional role by asking a man to marry her, this seemed more risky to station management.

Audience/Parasocial Relationships

Caplis and Sporer were not the only ones participating in the proposal. There was also a large audience tuned in. As mentioned above, the station received a large number of letters and phone calls from viewers, overwhelmingly expressing support for the event. To understand this response, it may be helpful to frame it in terms of a parasocial relationship between newscasters and the viewing public.

The parasocial interaction allows viewers to establish a connection with the people they see on television, and this occurs in several different ways. On one level, viewers may seek advice from a television personality -- for instance, getting the latest forecast from a meteorologist or product advice from a consumer reporter. On a deeper level, viewers may see newscasters as their friends, wanting more details about their personal lives, much as they would in interpersonal relationships.

The idea of parasocial interaction was presented more than three decades ago by Horton and Wohl (1956) when they talked about a relationship between a television viewer and a media "persona." There has been a great deal of speculation about whether the conversational style and gestures seen on television may foster such a relationship. Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985) posited that if an individual regards media as important and senses a personal interaction with media personalities, then the parasocial relationship may lead to greater dependency on the medium and those personalities. That dependency may partly be a result of a changing definition of community. Beniger (1987) suggested that people increasingly interact with other people via technological means, replacing traditional communities with pseudo-communities. Beniger also suggested that the distinctions between interpersonal communication and mass communication may no longer apply as humans become more dependent upon technology to meet social functions. It is in this context that newscasters may fill a more central role in the viewers' social reality.

In looking at videotape of the proposal, it appears Dan Caplis understands the existence of a relationship between newscasters and viewers.

> (Addressing Sporer) Aimee, there's something else I want to say, O.K.? Um, there's one thing I really like about you, O.K.? And that's the fact that you, you sincerely -- and I know this because I spend time with you -- you sincerely believe that the people who watch your newscasts are like extended family and you always treat them very well, and I really like that. And, uh, so there's something I'd like to say to you and to them, and (addressing the camera) to you. (Transcription, see appendix A)

Caplis very intentionally addresses viewers by making eye contact with the camera and nodding to the audience. It appears at this point he is consciously drawing the audience into the discourse, including them as a part of what is about to happen. In fact, in his interview, Caplis said he very much wanted the audience to be part of the proposal.

> I was very sure Aimee wanted to marry me, and I knew I wanted to marry her. Then I thought, there's nothing at

> all wrong with sharing that publicly. It's a positive thing. And she's part of people's lives. They're not going to be there for the wedding. Why not have them there for the engagement?

In the interview, Caplis also talked about the fact he believes Sporer has a strong relationship with the audience, and they with her. "People seem to regard her as more of a quasi-friend than just a TV person," he said. Koenig and Lessan (1985) also used that same term, "quasi-friend," as a result of research they did into viewers' relationships with TV personalities. The researchers found that viewers rate their relationships with TV personalities somewhere between those of friends and acquaintances. Caplis said he realized when he was out with Aimee in public "how many people really consider her to be more than just a TV person to them. I wouldn't say a member of the family, but more than just somebody on TV." Caplis and Sporer perhaps didn't know how true that was until they started getting reaction to the proposal. Says Sporer, "It gave me new insight into how people view us, and that there is that blurred line between informer and anchor and friend."

The family image is exactly what television stations promote, as a way to build viewer loyalty. As TV critic Howard Rosenberg put it:

> Stations for years have promoted their local news personalities not only as a family unto themselves -- warm, cuddly and complementary -- but also as the community's extended family. These aren't cold androids. . .They care about us, they're part of us. How could we not welcome these wonderful human beings into our homes each evening? (Rosenberg, 1993, p. 19)

Our examination of viewer letters that followed the proposal certainly reflects that attitude. "We always feel like family," said one viewer. Another said of Sporer, "I think it is wonderful--she is like a close friend coming into our homes each day with a glorious smile and caring attitude." Levy (1979) found in an extensive study of television news viewers that the parasocial relationship develops over time and is based upon a history of shared experiences, as the newscaster "visits" the viewer each day like a friend, bringing "gossip" in the form of news. For some viewers, the daily visit is even marked by the fact that they, on occasion, verbally respond to the newscaster with their own comment such as "good evening" or "you're welcome." Some of the letters were addressed simply to Dan and Aimee, indicating some viewers felt they were on a first name basis with the newscasters.

Other letters also reflect a sense of very personal inclusion in the proposal. "It was thoughtful of Dan Caplis to include everyone in his plan," one read. Another wrote, "I thank them for sharing that with me." Notice how this particular letter writer uses the personal pronoun "me," reflecting a sense that he or she felt specifically included in the event. For another viewer, the proposal was an emotionally-moving event: "I have to confess I had tears of joy in my eyes." It was not unusual for viewers to indicate they felt they had been a part of the event.

> It was evident he put a lot of thought and planning into exactly what he wanted to do--and his work was such an important part of his life--it meant a lot to him to be able to ask her on the set. . . Also as a viewer I felt honored that he would share such an important moment in his life

> with all of us. They are in the spotlight all the time on the news--and he allowed the public to be a part of their lives even now.

This particular letter indicates the writer felt a personal understanding of Caplis and even his motives.

One card said; "Thanks for letting us be a part of your love--I loved every minute of it--keep your up your great reporting!" This viewer apparently felt as if he or she had transcended the gap between viewer and television personality to actually become part of the love the two newscasters felt for each other. When the viewer writes about keeping up the great reporting, one is left wondering if the reference is to the reporting of the news or reporting of intimate details of the anchors' personal lives.

Some letters acknowledge the fact that viewers appreciated the wedding proposal because it let them see the anchors as real people. "It was nice to see that you people are regular people too and not just robots sitting in chairs," said one, and another, "I enjoyed seeing two people usually seen on a professional basis show their true human and emotional sides." This seems to reflect an attitude from some audience members for a desire to see anchor people as more personal, more like themselves.

A question left unanswered is whether audiences want to know more about female newscasters than males. When the three female network morning show anchors were pregnant, there seemed to be disproportionate coverage of their pregnancies. Part of this could be attributed to the fact that male managers of these programs may have intentionally played up the pregnancies to gain a ratings advantage. As seen here, it is not unheard of for television executives to makes decisions based on perceived audience reaction and interest to events involving anchors' personal lives. Yet there may also be something to the idea that viewers, representing normative values, believe they have more right to know personal information about female newscasters than male. What information, for example, do we have about the personal life of Walter Cronkite?

Whatever else the letters Sporer and Caplis received from viewers might mean, they provide evidence that viewers take their relationships with television personalities seriously. The effort it takes to send a letter or card, and the familiarity with which they address the anchors, reflects a strong perceived personal connection to these people they might otherwise never know.

Summary

By looking at the context, text, and audience reaction, this study has tried to offer some insights into one event in local television news that may have implications beyond this one incident.

This case study may give us some indication of what direction local news coverage is heading. The fact that a marriage proposal between two newscasters would rate as a bona fide news story may indicate movement toward more emotional and personal kinds of stories and away from the traditional news values which emphasized events and information.

From a feminist perspective, this event seems to offer support for the idea that despite some gains made by women in television news, it is still an enterprise under patriarchal control, which sends out messages that may reinforce traditional stereotypes about gender roles.

Finally, the positive reaction to the proposal by members of the audience may offer further insight into the parasocial relationship that exists between audience members and the people they see on their television screens. In this case, some audience members were very pleased by what they saw, whether because it reinforced traditional norms in regard to marriage practices or because it offered them more of a glimpse into the personal lives of people who come into their homes each day.

In the future, it will be interesting to note whether we see local news continuing to move toward content that is more personal, more emotional and that plays upon viewers' interest in personal details about anchors' lives. Researchers may also want to monitor whether women anchors are given more opportunities to take leading roles in newscasts, or are allowed to co-anchor with other women rather than always being paired with men.

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Appendix A

A transcript of the proposal

(Caplis): In the federal court, the judges have been reduced, in the view of many judges, to mere mathematicians. They have this complicated sentencing formula, Aimee, that they have to follow. You almost have to have a calculus degree to be a federal judge. There just isn't much room for gut feeling now with the federal court judges.

(Sporer): So they're pretty predictable in the federal court.

(Caplis): Federal court. State court you never know -- well, you have some idea, but you're not sure what you're getting into as a trial attorney, a defendant, or an interested citizen.

(Sporer). All right, thanks very much, Dan Caplis.

(Caplis): Well, Aimee, there's something else I want to say, O.K.? Um, there's one thing I really like about you, O.K.? And that's the fact that you, you sincerely -- and I know this because I spend time with you -- you sincerely believe that the people who watch your newscasts are like extended family and you always treat them very well, and I really like that. And, uh, so there's something I'd like to say to you and to them and, uh, to you. And that is that I really feel like I've been blessed. I mean, I have the greatest parents in the world, I have super friends, I have a fun job, more stuff than a guy should have. But, uh, until you came to the station a year ago there was really kind of a crater, I was like a lost dog. And the last year has been the best year of my life and, uh, so I just want to give you something as a token of that. I've never done this before, but I'd like to ask you if you'd marry me?

(Sporer): I would love to marry you. I love you. This is truly bizarre! This is absolutely wonderful.

(Caplis): Well, thank you, and uh, I'll look forward to seeing you when the show is over.

(Sporer): Me, too!

(Bill Stuart): Larry (Green, the weathercaster) was here, but he got all misty and he had to leave.

(Caplis): How's the weather tonight, Bill?

(Stuart): I don't know. You know, we're in for another cool-down -- obviously not around here! But Larry will be up with the forecast in just a minute, so stay with us.

Tabloids, Lawyers and Competition Made Us Do It!: How Journalists Construct, Interpret and Justify Coverage of the O.J. Simpson Story

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Paper presented to the Qualitative Studies Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Convention, August 9-12, 1995, in Washington, D.C.

ABSTRACT

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Issues of three media journals published in September-December 1994 were analyzed to examine journalists' construction, interpretation and justification of coverage of the O.J. Simpson story. Zelizer's conception of journalists as interpretive communities and professional news media ideology provided the theoretical framework. Initial assessment of media performance was generally negative, but journalists tended to deny responsibility for questionable practices while placing blame elsewhere. The Simpson story serves as a critical event for reexamining several journalistic practices.

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Tabloids, Lawyers and Competition Made Us Do It!: How Journalists Construct, Interpret and Justify Coverage of the O.J. Simpson Story

Introduction

Within hours of the discovery of the bodies of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman in June 1994, media coverage of the double murder and accusations that O.J. Simpson committed the crime became intense -- perhaps the most intense coverage in history of a crime involving private citizens. In attempting to explain the media's fascination with the O.J. Simpson story, media scholar Everette Dennis said on a CNN broadcast, "There's never been another story like this one." If that's true, does that unusualness, alone, account for the unprecedented media coverage?

Critique of the media's coverage of the Simpson story also began almost immediately after the murders, with much of it published in daily newspapers within hours or days of particular events. (See, for example, Rasberry, 1994; Rosenthal, 1994; Rich, 1994.) The audience for those critiques was the general public, and perhaps, secondarily, other journalists. More important for understanding the Simpson media phenomenon are articles and critiques that have begun appearing in professional news media journals. It is in those journals that journalists are constructing, interpreting and justifying the media's role and performance in covering the O.J. Simpson story.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how professional news media journals portray the media's coverage of the O.J. Simpson story in an attempt to explain why this story is being so intensely and sensationally covered and, perhaps, to explain how journalists account for their own behavior and ethical standards.

Theoretical Perspective

In her 1993 work on journalists as interpretive communities, Barbie Zelizer suggests that viewing journalism within the framework of a profession is perhaps not the most fruitful way to conceptualize American journalism. Instead, she proposes viewing journalism "not only as a profession but also as an interpretive community, united through its shared discourse and collective interpretations of key public events" (219).

Zelizer contends that a professional frame does not account for a number of journalistic practices, including usage of constructions of reality as a way of presenting the news, informal networking among journalists, and use of narrative and storytelling. Also, journalism lacks--and actively resists--some of the trappings of professionalism.

Zelizer (1993) applies the idea of "interpretive community" found in anthropology, folklore and literary studies to journalists:

> Journalists as an interpretive community are united through their collective interpretations of key public events. The shared discourse that they produce is thus a marker of how they see themselves as journalists (223).

By retelling stories about certain key events or critical incidents (such as Watergate and McCarthyism), journalists set up and negotiate preferred standards of action. Those standards are used for judging contemporary journalistic practices (Zelizer, 1993).

> Discourse about critical incidents offers a way of attending to concerns at issue for the journalistic community, and professional consciousness emerges at least in part around ruptures where the borders of appropriate practice need renegotiation. For contemporary

> reporters, such discourse creates standards of professional behavior against which to evaluate daily newswork. Discourse tends to proliferate when addressing unresolved dimensions of everyday newswork (Zelizer, 1993, 224).

Journalists' interpretations of critical events have both a local and durational mode, according to Zelizer. In the local mode of interpretation, journalists' authority to discuss a critical incident derives from their presence at the event, "from the ideology of eyewitness authenticity" (224).

> The local mode of discourse can be either positive or negative. Although journalists might and do discuss initially the pros and cons of any given change in their standards of practice, they quickly reach consensus about the meaning of such change. Already at the time of occurrence, then, the event is filtered for its value in setting up and maintaining standards of action (Zelizer, 1993, 225).

In cases of professional accomplishment, discourse tends to suggest emulation of the practices embodied in the critical incident. Awards are presented, the critical incident is discussed in trade magazines and at professional meetings and journalists try to associate themselves with the event. Emulation and awards are not part of the local mode of discourse associated with professional failure. Instead, reporters try to distance themselves from the critical event by "emphasizing how they observed what was going on but did not participate, or referencing other journalists who were involved, or simply marking out their own membership in the community" (Zelizer, 1993, 225). Regardless of whether the change reflected in the event is positive or negative, the local interpretation will tend to be one-dimensional, thereby helping to maintain the collective boundaries of journalists as an interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993, 225).

The durational mode of interpretation may occur months or years after the critical event. In the durational mode, reporters may or may not have had direct experience with the critical event.

> Reporters create their own history of journalism by making each critical incident representative of some greater journalistic dilemma or practice.... Reporters use durational discourse to generate a continuum of contemporary reportorial work against which they can situate themselves. They discuss a given incident as a marker in this continuum by connecting it to other incidents that both preceded and followed it (Zelizer, 1993, 226).

The unitary interpretation of a critical event typical of the local mode of discourse is often replaced in the durational mode by journalists differentially associating themselves with the event. Practices that have been emulated may become the subject of critique. "In the case of professional failure, reporters begin to show differential association by appreciating their pedagogical value even if at the time they occurred reporters found them problematic (Zelizer, 1993, 226).

Certainly, the O.J. Simpson story is one that should generate shared discourse and collective interpretations among journalists. But it is also one whose coverage can be explained in part by viewing journalism as a profession with its accompanying ideologies.

A profession can be defined as an occupation that is based on systematic, formal knowledge about a particular field and involves high levels of autonomy and codes of conduct formulated and administered by other members of the occupation (Johnson, 1986). Professionals are highly-trained experts performing a very specialized role in society (Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969). A profession has exclusive possession of competence in certain types of knowledge and skills crucial to society (Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969).

Ideology, as it is used here, means "ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class" (Eagleton, 1991, 29). Ideology might be equated here with journalists' "world view" (Eagleton, 1991, 29).

While some scholars and journalists see journalism as an occupation (Goldstein, 1985), others view journalism as a profession. The particular knowledge or competence that journalists possess is their ability to decide what is news. As professionals, journalists see themselves as "more qualified than their audience to determine the audience's own interests and needs" (Tuchman, 1978, 108).

One of the conventions that journalists adhere to is objectivity. Being a professional journalist means approaching reporting as an objective, neutral, balanced chronicler of an event (Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 1978). Being objective means to be free from values and ideology (Gans, 1979). Journalists strive to exclude conscious values from their work; however, because enduring values underlie news judgment, those values (ethnocentricism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership) are included in the news without reporters being aware of the inclusion. Those values enter the news in the form of reality judgments journalists make. Many of those reality judgments are based on stereotypes (Gans 1979).

The largest organization for journalists in the world, The Society of Professional Journalists, incorporates "professional" into its name. The organization's magazine, *Quill*, carries the following quotation on its masthead: "...a magazine (that) surveys and interprets today's journalism while stimulating its readers to collective and individual action for the good of our profession." Another media journal, *Columbia Journalism Review*, also views journalism as a profession. On its masthead is this from the magazine's 1961 founding editorial explaining the publication's purpose: "To assess the performance of journalism...to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

Journalism is guided, theoretically, by codes of ethics, although journalists' aversion to licensing or regulation in any form and the importance of freedom in their world view has resulted in codes of ethics without enforcement mechanisms. What the codes do, however, is reflect journalists' world views. The most widely used code among journalists is that of the Society of Professional Journalists (Black, Steele & Barney, 1993). SPJ (then called Sigma Delta Chi) first adopted its Code of Ethics in 1926 and revised it in 1973, 1984, and 1987. The latest revision removed a provision in the code that required journalists to "actively censure" code violators, leaving it with no enforcement mechanism (Black, Steele & Barney, 9). (The lack of code enforcement by other journalists would seem to place journalism outside the definition of a profession, but the professional frame is still useful in examining journalists' construction, interpretation and justification of a particular critical event.)

The introduction to the SPJ Code of Ethics states a number of ideologies or beliefs that underlie the practice of journalism, beginning with the belief that the duty of journalists is to serve the truth (See Appendix A). Other beliefs stated include:

-- Agencies of mass communication are carriers of public discussion and information based on their Constitutional mandate and freedom to learn and report the facts.

-- Public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice, and it is the media's "Constitutional role to seek the truth as part of the public's right to know the truth."

-- Because of these responsibilities, journalists are obligated "to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness."

The Code of Ethics then sets forth standards of practice in six areas: responsibility, freedom of the press, ethics, accuracy and objectivity, fair play, and mutual trust. Under responsibility appears this statement:

> The public's right to know of events of public importance and *interest* is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a high trust (emphasis added).

The Code of Ethics frames press freedom as an "inalienable right of people in a free society" and couples freedom with responsibility. The code defines as an ethical obligation protection of journalists' confidential sources of information. It is also an ethical responsibility of journalists to seek news that serves the public interest and to "make constant efforts to assure that the public's business is conducted in public."

Objectivity, according to the code, is "the mark of an experienced professional. It is a standard of performance toward which we strive. We honor those who achieve it." The code deplores inaccuracy and the expression of opinion or bias within news reports.

Journalists should "show respect for the dignity, privacy, rights and well-being of people encountered in the course of gathering and presenting the news," according to the code. That means "news media should not communicate unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without giving the accused a chance to reply." Nor should the media invade a person's right to privacy or "pander to morbid curiosity about details of vice and crime." Errors should be corrected promptly. Furthermore, the media should be accountable to the public for their reports.

An informal comparison of the standards set forth in the SPJ Code of Ethics with the media's behavior in the coverage of the O.J. Simpson case reveals some instances where the media have acted in accordance with the code's standards of practice. For example, in fighting to prevent Judge Lance Ito from closing the trial to television cameras, the media could argue that they were trying "to assure that the public's business is conducted in public." However, there are also numerous examples of the code being violated. Inaccuracy, invasion of privacy, checkbook journalism which undercuts public trust in the media and can affect legal proceedings, sensational reporting about the crime, etc., all represent "ruptures in the borders of appropriate practice" as defined by journalists as an interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993) and as defined by "professional" journalists in one of the profession's codes of ethics. Therefore, one would expect to find extensive discourse about the media's role in the O.J. Simpson story among journalists.

Methodology

Viewing journalism through the dual frames of interpretive community and profession should provide a better understanding of how journalists are constructing, interpreting and justifying coverage of the O.J. Simpson story than either frame would provide alone. Therefore, both were used in analyzing coverage of the Simpson story in three media trade journals.

The method used was a close reading and analysis of all articles specifically dealing with or mentioning the O.J. Simpson case that appeared in three professional journals directed at journalists within the time frame of September-December 1994. (The July/August issues of the three journals were not included in the analysis because they contained no mention of O.J. Simpson. Those issues had already been prepared by the time the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman occurred.) The context within which the stories appear (for example, other editorial material in the same issue and illustrations) was also noted.

Analysis focused on major articles and opinion columns either dealing directly with the media's coverage of the O.J. Simpson story or dealing with media issues brought to the foreground by incidents related to the story (for example, use of anonymous sources). Materials were read specifically for evidence of journalists functioning as an interpretive community and for examples of professional ideology and values being used to justify the media's actions. News briefs and humor columns dealing with the Simpson story were also noted.

The journals chosen for the analysis were *American Journalism Review* (*AJR*), *Columbia Journalism Review* (*CJR*), and *Quill*. *AJR* and *CJR* are published by journalism schools at the University of Maryland and Columbia University, respectively. Articles are frequently written by working journalists as well as by media scholars who were reporters and\or editors before moving into academia. *Quill*, which calls itself "the magazine for journalists," is the official publication of the Society of Professional Journalists. SPJ's membership is made up of both print and electronic journalists. All three journals regularly cover and critique the performance of both print and broadcast media.

The September, October, November and December issues of *AJR* were analyzed, along with the September/October and November/December issues of *CJR* and the September, October and November/December issues of *Quill*.

Findings

The O.J. Simpson story was a popular topic for *AJR*, *CJR*, and *Quill* during the fall of 1994. Each published at least one Simpson-related cover story during that period. Simpson or the Simpson story was mentioned in a total of 35 articles, columns and brief items in the nine issues, including six in *CJR*, 14 in *AJR* and 15 in *Quill*. Some of the articles focused on the Simpson case while others only mentioned it in passing. Some of the items were humorous. For example, Simpson's name appeared in a headline blooper column and a cliche' column in *AJR* and in *CJR*'s "The Lower case," a regular feature that reproduces bloopers from newspapers around the country.

AJR and *CJR* ran cover stories about the Simpson story in their September and September/October issues respectively.

The *CJR* cover features a photograph of Simpson and his attorney, Robert Shapiro. Only half of Simpson's face appears on the cover. Shapiro, also with only half his face visible, has his back turned to Simpson and is whispering to an unidentified man. In a dark void between Simpson and Shapiro appears a headline in reverse type for the cover story: "Professional Secrets: How O.J.'s Lawyer Works the Press." The article, which appears inside under the headline "Secrets of a Celebrity Lawyer: How O.J.'s chief strategist works the press," is written by Shapiro (1994). Photographs of Shapiro with Simpson (both with their backs to the camera) and of Shapiro facing a mob of reporters and photographers illustrate the article. Following Shapiro's five-page article is a one-page description of life in the press room for the O.J. Simpson preliminary hearing written by a reporter for a California newspaper (Yarnall, 1994). Two bloopers referring to Simpson appear in "The Lower case," a regular feature that runs inside the back cover of the magazine. No other references to Simpson appear in the issue.

AJR's cover carries a television image of Simpson above a two-line headline that reads: "Judgment Calls. The Media's O.J. Obsession." Below the headline is the byline of the writer of the article, Jacqueline Sharkey. Inside, Sharkey's seven-page article is accompanied by three sidebars. An enlarged block of type on the first page captures the theme of the main article: "The O.J. obsession reflects the power of live television to shape news. And it frames in the starkest of terms the age-old debate: Should the public get what it wants or what it needs?" (Sharkey, 1994a) The sidebars deal with checkbook journalism (Sharkey, 1994b), Shapiro's strategy for manipulating the media ("Speak Low and Speak Slow," 1994), and a story about coverage of Simpson defense strategy to discredit a white police officer by suggesting he planted evidence (Sharkey, 1994c). The article is illustrated by a large drawing of Simpson's face reflected in the lenses of six television cameras. The cameras are set against a background of small drawings illustrating a number of major news stories that occurred within the same time frame, including the invasion of Haiti. Another drawing shows Justice, blindfold removed, watching two television sets simultaneously. A third depicts the media as puppets on strings being manipulated by a pair of large, disembodied hands. Elsewhere in the September issue of *AJR* are articles about tabloid journalism and the Simpson case (Prato, 1994; Morton, 1994), cliched coverage of Simpson's arraignment (Cliche' Corner, 1994), and a short story in an inserted newsletter from The Freedom Forum disavowing media responsibility for guaranteeing Simpson a fair trial (Guaranteeing O J Simpson a fair trial isn't media's job, journalists say, 1994).

Quill did not put Simpson on its cover until its annual November/December Ethics Special Edition. The cover features 16 copies of Simpson's mug shot from the Los Angeles Police Department. It is the same photograph that *Time* magazine computer-altered to make Simpson's skin appear darker and used on its cover last summer, setting off a wave of criticism. These, too, appear to have been altered for artistic purposes, but do not make Simpson appear more sinister as the *Time* illustration did. Inside are two major articles, both reprinted from other publications. "Buying headlines: Journalism and justice clash over the checkbook" first appeared in *The New Yorker* (Toobin, 1994), while "*Simpsons* gone hellish: Case offers textbook challenge for media" was published first in *The Communicator* (Stone, 1994). A full page illustration depicting all or parts of 16 mug shots of Simpson appears opposite the first page of Toobin's checkbook journalism story. A photo of a cover of a supermarket tabloid also illustrates the article.

Simpson is also mentioned in the *Quill* editor's column (Steffens, 1994), in a news brief about tabloid coverage (Running ragged, 1994), and in two articles appearing in a separate "O J Simpson" section of Roundup (Legal guide, 1994; Pulling advertising, 1994). The newly installed president of SPJ devotes his column to a discussion of the damage the Simpson story has done to public confidence in the media and to a listing of the stories the media overlooked in 1994 (Stuart, 1994).

While these three issues contain the most extensive discourse about the O.J. Simpson story, others also include significant stories. The seven-page cover story of the December issue of *AJR* was inspired by the use and misuse of anonymous sources in the coverage of the Simpson story (Shepard, 1994). A sidebar lists five erroneous Simpson stories based on false information attributed to unnamed sources (Sharkey, 1994d). Other Simpson mentions occur in an article on televising trials (Denniston, 1994) and in a bloopers column (Take 2, 1994).

A major article in the November/December *CJR* deals with Simpson and the black media (Shipp, 1994). Two other articles use Simpson as a touchstone for examinations of tabloid media and checkbook journalism (Hanson, 1994; Mengelkoch, 1994), and a third uses a Simpson example to introduce a story on online communication between journalists and their readers (Wolff, 1994).

Quill devoted three pages to Simpson in its September issue -- at a time *AJR* and *CJR* were devoting considerably more space to the story. Under a section heading in Roundup called "O.J. Simpson Frenzy," *Quill* published three shorts (Checkbook ban, 1994; Job openings, 1994; Black and white, 1994), a story about beefed up coverage of the Simpson story (Guly, 1994), and a one-page examination of whether the media irreparably damaged Simpson's chances of getting a fair trial and should the media care (Fair trial vs. free press, 1994). Then-SPJ president Paul McMasters devoted his column to a defense of the media (McMasters, 1994).

October's issue of *Quill* contains only two brief items in the Roundup section (Wrong number, 1994; Cable tops O.J. rank, 1994). Coverage was also light in the October *AJR*. The computer-altered mug shot of Simpson is mentioned in a story on the weekly news magazines

(Triplett, 1994). The November issue of *AJR* limited Simpson coverage to use as examples in a story on television newsmagazines. (Zurawik and Stoehr, 1994). The article is illustrated with, among other things, a photo of Simpson on a television screen along with a poll question (Should O.J. Be Executed If Found Guilty?) and a 900-number for viewers to call to respond. The article also includes photos of Barbara Walters interviewing Ronald Goldman's family and Sam Donaldson interviewing two police officers who took part in the negotiation of Simpson's surrender.

****

One comes away from a careful reading of these professional journals with several impressions. First, the local mode of interpretation by journalists of the O.J. Simpson story as a critical event is generally negative. Several articles outline the criticism of media performance in covering the Simpson story (see below), and generally little attempt is made to deny the behavior criticized. The discourse centers on, in Zelizer's words, "ruptures where the borders of appropriate practice need renegotiation" (1993, 224). Much of that discourse is devoted to placing blame for the ruptures -- the inappropriate media behavior -- on persons and institutions outside the mainstream media and particularly outside mainstream print media. The mainstream journalists seem to be searching for demons to blame for their own shortcomings (Pauly, 1988).

Second, even though the Simpson story is still unfolding, some of the articles reflect a more durational mode of interpretation. Already journalists are using this story as a marker in the ongoing debate over use of anonymous sources, checkbook journalism, and whether the media should give the public what they want or what they need (Shepard, 1994; Toobin, 1994; Sharkey, 1994a).

Third, intertwined in the discourse are professional values and ideologies. Frequently invoked as interpretations of or rationalizations for media behavior are the media's First Amendment freedom and its accompanying responsibility; credibility, objectivity, truth, accuracy, fairness, competition and protection of confidential sources of information. These professional standards and ideologies are sometimes at odds with journalists' behavior and discourse reflected in the articles. Therefore, they are not very useful, as Zelizer (1993) suggested, in explaining such phenomena as the pack journalism described by Yarnall (1994) and illustrated by *CJR* and *AJR* both using all or part of an article by Simpson attorney Robert Shapiro the same month (Shapiro, 1994; "Speak Low and Speak Slow," 1994).

The media have been criticized for a number of sins in their coverage of the O.J. Simpson case. These criticisms are repeated in several articles in the journals studied and target such media behaviors as inaccurate reporting resulting from the pressure of competition, media manipulation by lawyers on both sides, preoccupation with ratings, abdication of responsibility to inform the public about important issues, speculation about Simpson's guilt or innocence, sexism, racism, and checkbook journalism on the part of tabloids (Sharkey, 1994a).

One writer characterized the Simpson story as "a nightmare for the profession," and quoted journalism professor Bryce Nelson as saying the coverage has "been overkill on a story about an overkill" (Guly 1994).

Tabloids, Lawyers and Competition Made Us Do It'

A recounting of the criticism by then-SPJ President Paul McMasters in the September issue of *Quill* also reveals some journalists' tendencies to shift the blame for transgressions away from themselves. McMasters writes:

> The public loves to hate the press.
>
> The O.J. Simpson case is an excellent example. Our critics charge that we overplayed the story, we invaded people's privacy, we rushed to publish and to broadcast unsubstantiated rumors, we let both prosecutors and defense attorneys manipulate us, we derailed a grand jury investigation, and we continue to sensationalize and scandalize and jeopardize a fair trial.
>
> We all know that assaults on the press didn't begin with the Simpson case nor will they end with the siege of a television station in Kansas City (in which police demanded and eventually got a videotape showing a woman being abducted who was later killed).
>
> What we don't seem to realize is that too often we respond to these attacks on the press in our usual way: we just hunker down and try to ignore them. We know in our hearts how important a free and independent press is to democracy and we just assume everyone else does. That's a dangerous assumption.
>
> The Kansas City incident is ample evidence of the willingness of supposedly enlightened officials to ride roughshod over the First Amendment and the press, knowing full well that the public is not going to rush to our rescue.
>
> We have to do a better job of telling the story. We have to do a better job of making it clear that it is wrong for police and prosecutors to commandeer the press for their own uses. That corrodes the credibility of the press. And when that happens, the prosecutor, the police, the press, and the public all lose (McMasters, 1994, 42).

What's interesting about this passage is the total denial of culpability on the part of the media. McMasters' message is that violations of accepted media standards in pursuit of the Simpson story were not the mainstream media's fault. McMasters does not deny that the media did the things for which they were criticized, but he frames the criticism as an attack on the media. He absolves the media of responsibility by cloaking the activities in the ideology of professional journalism. For example, in McMasters' framing, the First Amendment makes it wrong for attorneys to manipulate the press because it damages the credibility of the press; it is not the media's responsibility to avoid being manipulated. McMasters also uses the ideology of the importance of a free and independent press in a democracy to justify media behavior.

The abdication of responsibility is a theme that runs through most of the issues studied. One can almost hear journalists whining from the pages, "We did it, but it's not our fault!" Not only do they deny responsibility but they devote a good bit of energy to placing blame and responsibility on institutions other than mainstream news media. In the process journalists seem to be ignoring that part of their professional ideology that couples responsibility with the rights of a free press.

One criticism of the media has been that they allowed themselves to be manipulated by both defense and prosecution attorneys. Sharkey (1994a) presents what appears to be a fairly balanced account of this in her *AJR* cover story in which she quotes newspaper media critics, attorneys and reporters. The *Los Angeles Times*, she notes, "'found the Simpson case such a 'clinic in manipulation' that it started a column, The Spin, 'as a forum to educate readers,' says City Editor Joel Sappell" (24). Sharkey (1994a) also recounts manipulation efforts by Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti and the media counterattack by defense attorney Robert L. Shapiro. She quotes broadcast journalist Sam Donaldson who justifies manipulation as just part of the business: "The media are used by everyone.... A reporter's obligation is to try to find out what the facts are, but not to say 'Well, I'm being used, and therefore I'm not going to carry this statement'" (Sharkey, 1994a).

A sidebar to Sharkey's main story quotes extensively from an article Shapiro published in the January/February 1993 issue of *The Champion*, the magazine of the National Association of

Criminal Defense Lawyers, in which he advised attorneys on how to manipulate journalists to further the goals of the defense team ("Speak Low and Speak Slow," 1994). *Quill*, in perhaps the ultimate denial of journalistic responsibility for manipulation by attorneys, reprinted Shapiro's article in full without comment as the cover story for its September issue (Shapiro, 1994). "The importance and power of the media cannot be overemphasized," Shapiro writes (1994, 25). Later he notes, "There is no question that media coverage can and does affect the ultimate outcome of widely publicized cases" (29).

Shapiro's article reveals that he clearly understands the media and the ideology that underpins journalists' behavior. For example, he suggests to his fellow defense attorneys: "If a story appeared that you liked, compliment the reporter on his or her objectivity" (Shapiro, 1994, 28). He explains the competition that exists among reporters and advises against giving one reporter a "scoop" because it could damage relations with other members of the press. He also offers extensive advice on media deadlines and on dealing with the television cameras, including appearances and speech patterns that come across best on television.

Shapiro also understands the power of the media to shape reality. "Come up with phrases that you believe in and are comfortable saying. Repeat them continuously, and they will be repeated by the media. After awhile, the repetition almost becomes a fact. That is your ultimate goal" (Shapiro, 1994, 29).

Shapiro probably ingratiates himself with mainstream media because he distinguishes between "legitimate" members of the press and those who work for tabloids. In his article he refers repeatedly to "legitimate" members of the news media as opposed to tabloid reporters.

Shapiro doesn't cooperate with tabloids, which probably endears him to mainstream journalists who carefully and adamantly distinguish themselves from tabloid reporters (Bird, 1990, 1992, Pauly, 1988).

Quill also seems to deny journalists' responsibility for media manipulation by attorneys by what it did not publish in the issues studied. Sometimes cited as the most extreme case of media manipulation by Shapiro and his team (Sharkey, 1994a) was an article published in the July 25, 1994, edition of *The New Yorker* in which journalist Jeffrey Toobin wrote about Simpson's lawyers considering accusing Los Angeles police of planting evidence to implicate Simpson in the murder of his ex-wife (Toobin, 1994a). While *AJR* devoted a page to the article and the furor it created (Sharkey, 1994c), *Quill* published nothing about the controversy. But in its Annual Ethics Issue, *Quill* excerpted and adapted another of Toobin's articles from *The New Yorker*, this one originally published July 11, 1994. The article deals with tabloid newspapers and television shows paying for witness interviews (Toobin, 1994b). Toobin is identified only as a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. He is not linked to one of the more controversial stories published in conjunction with the Simpson case.

Journalists also deny any responsibility for affecting the judicial process. When a Los Angeles judge halted the grand jury's inquiry into the Simpson case because publicity may have unduly influenced the jurors, journalists tended to blame attorneys for both sides (Sharkey, 1994a). Several media ran polls and mock juries in which the public could vote on Simpson's guilt or innocence and voice their opinions on whether Simpson should receive the death penalty if convicted (Sharkey, 1994a; Zurawik and Stoehr, 1994).

Despite the media blitz, the standard line from journalists is that the media do not affect the judicial process. For example, this paragraph quoting Jane Kirtley, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, appears in one *AJR* article:

> There is "no basis whatsoever that pretrial publicity undermines the ability of the defendant to get a fair trial, because we've seen time and time again that they're acquitted," says Kirtley..., pointing to acquittals in high-profile trials such as those of William Kennedy Smith and the police officers in the Rodney King case (Sharkey, 1994a, 24).

What Kirtley and others ignore is the possibility that a guilty person may have been acquitted because of excessive publicity. A fair trial does not necessarily result in an acquittal as Kirtley implies.

Quill asked a panel of six editors and news media executives two questions and the reasons for their responses for an article headlined "Fair trial vs. free press" that appeared in the magazine's "O.J. Simpson Frenzy" section in September. The questions were: (1) "Has (sic) the news media irreparably damaged O.J. Simpson's chances or right to a fair trial?" (2) "Should we the media care?"

Five of the six said media coverage has not affected Simpson's ability to get a fair trial and the sixth claimed media were only partially to blame. Mike Phillips, editor of *The Sun* in Bremerton, Washington, wrote:

> O.J. Simpson kissed the Sixth Amendment goodbye when he took his defense to the airwaves. But maybe he was pushed.
>
> The news media are only partly to blame. We've been played like symphonic instruments by the police, the defense attorneys, and by the various entertainment media that write checks and call themselves news media (Fair trial vs. free press, 1994).

One newspaper executive suggested that O.J. himself is to blame for the excessive media coverage and that the coverage has helped, not hurt. Terry Raskyn, vice president of development for Globe Communications Corp., wrote:

> The news media have in no way damaged O.J.'s chances of a fair trial--if at all, his chances have been enhanced. The intense media scrutiny would not have existed to the degree which it does if that Friday night "slow-speed" chase had not occurred--something which was created by O.J. himself. ...If anything, it has been the DA and the defense team du jour that has more damaged O.J.'s chances (Fair trial vs. free press, 1994).

William F. Woo, editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, suggested that the U.S. Supreme Court's 1966 decision in *Sheppard v. Maxwell*, which places responsibility for dealing with pretrial and trial publicity on the judge, means that it is the court's responsibility to control courtroom atmosphere and what jurors are exposed to, not the media's (Fair trial vs. free press, 1994).

Responses to whether the media should care if Simpson receives a fair trial were highly self-centered. Among them:

-- "We should care that our reports are accurate and fair."

-- "We should care about fair trial, but first things first: We should care about our reputations. When we participate in a media circus that the public finds disgusting, we also are found disgusting."

-- "As citizens, the media should care. But the media cannot judge a story purely on whether it has a negative impact on one or another person. Almost every story has pluses or minuses for individuals. You cannot take that into consideration in news coverage" (Fair trial vs. free press, 1994).

Tabloids, Lawyers and Competition Made Us Do It!

If mainstream journalists are not to blame for the excesses, who -- besides O.J. Simpson himself, his attorneys and the prosecutors -- is responsible? According to the publications examined, there are several culprits, including tabloid newspapers and television shows, and the pressure of competition for ratings and readers. The results have been widespread use of checkbook journalism, dependence on anonymous sources and inaccurate reporting.

As the quote from Phillips, the Bremerton, Washington, editor, indicates, favorite scapegoats for the media's performance in covering the Simpson story are the tabloid media. Not only have tabloid media breached the limits of acceptable journalistic practice, they have "forced" mainstream media to do likewise in order to compete for readers and viewers (Prato, 1994; Morton, 1994). Tabloid television shows that pay sources for stories have forced network news divisions and local stations to pay indirectly for news. "Although they may not openly pay in cash, many use consulting fees, travel and entertainment expenses and other such covert arrangements" (Prato, 1994). Checkbook journalism undermines media credibility and, in the Simpson case, has subverted the judicial process by destroying the credibility of witnesses who were paid by the tabloids to tell their stories (Toobin, 1994b).

By providing more sensational coverage, mainstream media are also giving readers and viewers what they want, some journalists argue. "The success of the television tabloid shows and the spectacular circulation of the supermarket tabloids...clearly show a huge public appetite that even 'serious' newspapers are loathe to ignore in this era of sagging circulation (Morton, 1994). Morton then goes on to distinguish mainstream media from the tabloids and to justify tabloid-type stories:

> Mainstream newspapers, of course, tend to approach...the O.J. Simpson case with far more circumspection than is typical of the television tabloid shows or even many local television news broadcasts. And newspapers too tend to dwell on the sociological significance of these events, a kind of respectable wrapping for a disreputable package.
>
> ...Newspapers...are in the business of feeding readers the information they want to read about. And if that information sometimes is lightweight and salacious and sometimes displaces or overshadows information they *ought* to read, so be it.
>
> The First Amendment, after all, makes no judgments about the quality of information it protects. The outrageous, the provocative, the irritating, even the irresponsible are protected, as well as their opposites. The American public is entitled to it all. From this, however imperfectly, the truth emerges. (Morton, 1994)

Some journalists argue that not giving readers and viewers what they want is "elitist" while others contend that covering the Simpson story trivializes real news (Sharkey, 1994a).

Seattle Post-Intelligencer correspondent and *CJR* contributing editor, Christopher Hanson, criticizes the way mainstream media subordinated coverage of the U.S. invasion of Haiti to the Simpson story. "(The Haiti invasion) is evidently too sophisticated to please mainstream journalism's tabloid gatekeepers who have O.J. on the brain." He continues:

> Denouncing tabloid mania is now something of a craze itself. TV discussion shows address such questions as whether the hyper-publicized O.J. -- whose picture is flashed repeatedly during such segments -- can get a fair trial. The beauty is that these forums can be used simultaneously to deplore sensationalism and indulge in it" (Hanson, 1994).

To emphasize his point, Hanson had his editors illustrate his column with a photograph of Michael Jackson and his bride, Lisa Marie Presley. "He (Jackson) isn't discussed here, but the substance doesn't matter. It's the sensation that counts" (Hanson, 1994).

In the same issue of *CJR* appears a long article that defends sensationalism and checkbook journalism used by the tabloids as part of a case history unrelated to the Simpson story (Mengelkoch, 1994).

Competition and the bottom line have also driven coverage of the Simpson case, sometimes resulting in inaccurate reporting. Competition has "forced" journalists to use material from anonymous sources before it could be confirmed in order to beat their competitors (Sharkey, 1994a, Shepard, 1994). The fact that business decisions drive news decisions is defined as a "virtue" by Ted Koppel, anchor and managing editor of ABC's "Nightline," because it gives the public a voice in shaping the news agenda. "If people are really tired of it, don't watch it, turn it off. You will be amazed at how quickly the networks will get the message," Koppel says (Sharkey, 1994a).

Two other aspects of media coverage of O.J. Simpson as reflected in the journals studied also need to be addressed.

Stone's article titled "*Simpsons* gone hellish" inadvertently reiterates the media's obsession with Simpson at the expense of coverage of the murder victims. In noting that there was "no way that people in news, especially broadcast news, could not cover this complex, riveting event," Stone misidentifies one of the victims as "Gary" Goldman. Later in the article Stone berates the media for using "O.J." alone to identify Simpson. "Nicknames are out of place in serious reporting; they can improperly create or reinforce a sympathetic public view of a person, in this case one accused of a crime; they can imply favoritism by the journalist using them" (Stone, 1994, 25). Ironically, most of the issues studied identified Simpson simply as "O.J." in one or more headlines, including twice on covers.

Under a headline reading "O.J. and the Black Media," *CJR* explored how the black media are covering Simpson. The article deals with how the black media typically depict black people

Black newspapers usually show blacks as either "heroes whose career advances, civic achievement, or fame are hailed as strides for the entire race, or victims of an unjust America" (Shipp, 1994, 39). The problem Simpson presents for the black media is that he is neither a typical black hero nor a typical black victim. Because he does not fit into an existing construction of reality, the black media do not know how to portray him.

This article presents a clear example of the use of constructions of reality by media. The black media, as portrayed in this article, also reject some traditional journalistic ideologies, such as the need for objectivity and balance. The article explores the influence of race in the amount of coverage given the Simpson story.

> Those who articulate a racial explanation for Simpson's predicament expect that a "lynching" must follow -- not by mobs with baying hounds but most assuredly by mainstream newspapers and network television. Many blacks suspect that Simpson's race alone accounts for the saturation coverage of his case" (Shipp, 1994, 41).

* * * *

Because of the recency of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman, much of the discourse about the coverage of O.J. Simpson has been in the local mode. However, discussions of some topics have taken on more of a durational mode of interpretation among journalists in the issues studied: use of anonymous sources, checkbook journalism, and whether journalists should give people what they want or what they need.

An example of the durational mode of interpretation occurs in Shepard's exploration of use of anonymous sources. The use of anonymous sources in the Simpson case has brought to the forefront once again an ongoing debate over their appropriateness. Shepard (1994) quotes journalism professor Hugh Culbertson: "There was Watergate's Deep Throat in 1973, Janet Cooke (who fabricated a story that cited anonymous sources) around 1980....and now O.J. Simpson" (19). Thus the O.J. Simpson story is a marker on the continuum of journalistic practice involving use of anonymous sources (Zelizer, 1993). Several paragraphs of the article are devoted to situating the Simpson story on that continuum (Shepard, 1994, 22).

Journalists disagree about whether the Simpson experience should end the unnamed sources era. Some, like Tom Brislin who teaches journalism at the University of Hawaii, hope that "the O.J. story will be to anonymous sources what the 'Jimmy's World' story (by Janet Cooke)...was to deception, fictional and composite characters" (Shepard, 1994, 20). Supporters of confidential sources say they are a valuable tool, allowing journalists to uncover important stories that might not come to light otherwise (Shepard, 1994). The discourse reflects the varying interpretations often found in the durational mode.

Discussion and Conclusions

Why is O.J. Simpson a media obsession? Everette Dennis's statement that there's never been another story like this one may be accurate, but there seems to be more to it than that. Dennis provided a further explanation in the September issue of *AJR*. Television's technological capability has made television "the major definer of news," according to Dennis, executive director of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center. The networks chose to make the O.J. Simpson story "the principal concern of the nation" by preempting programming to cover the police chase. Television's decision to provide days of live coverage kept the Simpson story on top of the nation's news agenda and influenced how other media covered the story (Sharkey, 1994a, 20).

Underlying the media obsession with Simpson are economic factors. Articles note that ratings dipped when networks stopped covering the Simpson story to return to regular programming (Sharkey 1994a). Sales of some supermarket tabloids have increased by 30 percent since Simpson was charged (Guly, 1994). The intense competition for ratings and readers is blamed for some of the inaccuracies in the Simpson coverage.

The obsession also appears to have been fueled by attorneys for the prosecution and the defense attempting to tell their own versions of the story. Both sides clearly recognize the power of the media to shape reality and to affect the outcome of a trial and attempted to manipulate the media in order to construct their version of the Simpson story. The media appear to have offered little resistance to this manipulation.

Racism may also be a factor in the media's obsession. Had Nicole Brown Simpson been black instead of white, coverage might have been less intense. Also, as *Time* magazine so aptly illustrated by altering Simpson's photo to make him appear more sinister, white media, including supermarket tabloids, routinely demonize black men (Shipp, 1994; Bird, 1992).

Probably the most important reason for the media's Simpson obsession is the trend among mainstream media -- particularly television -- to treat news as entertainment. To entertain, media must give viewers and readers what they want in an interesting form. Many media consumers want to be told a story they want to hear, not presented with facts the media determine they need to hear. From the journalist's perspective, the entertaining story is often easier to report and write than the complex story about health care reform or government activity the audience needs to read or hear.

If news is to compete with entertainment for audiences and advertising, it has to be exciting or sexy (Sharkey, 1994a). To compete, mainstream news media have adopted many of the practices of tabloid television and the supermarket tabloids, both of which have entertainment as their primary goal and are unencumbered by the "professional" standards that journalists are supposed to adhere to. As Bird (1990, 1992) would undoubtedly argue, the mainstream media and the tabloids operate on the same storytelling continuum and are moving closer to each other. The Simpson story, as reporter Sam Fulwood III sardonically noted, "is the perfect news story . . . (It has) race, sex, money, power, athletes, beautiful women, layabouts, police, courts, chase, mystery, weapons. I can't think of any theme or subplot in any movie that has all this" (Sharkey 1994a, 21). Those factors, which also describe the perfect tabloid story, bear similarities to journalists' traditional definitions of what makes news.

One article in the journals studied suggests that Walter Cronkite's traditional closing, "And that's the way it is," no longer applies to network news. Instead, the new slogan of network news more appropriately should resemble the promotional motto for ABC's "Turning Point": "It feels like a movie, but it's real" (Zurawik and Stoehr, 1994, 34). The O.J. Simpson story feels like a movie, but it's real. That perhaps best explains the media's obsession with it.

Journalists will be debating the Simpson case for years to come. Their obsession with covering O.J. seems to have extended to an obsession with interpreting and justifying that coverage, if the amount of discourse on the subject in professional journals is any indication.

In the local mode of interpretation, journalists tend to negatively evaluate the O.J. Simpson story as a critical event, with much of the discourse devoted to placing blame for questionable behavior on persons and institutions outside the mainstream media. In a durational mode of interpretation, journalists are already using the Simpson story as a marker in the ongoing debate over use of anonymous sources, checkbook journalism and the role of the media in giving audiences what they want versus what they need. A common thread underlying much of the discourse is denial of responsibility delivered as a whine: "We did it, but it's not our fault!" From the perspective of the mainstream media, the real culprits in the sensational coverage of the Simpson story are tabloid media, lawyers and competition. Whatever the explanations and justifications journalists eventually settle on in their durational mode of interpretation of the media's O.J. obsession, the case will undoubtedly be a staple for media ethics discussions for years to come.

Appendix A

SPJ Code of Ethics

The Society of Professional Journalists,
Sigma Delta Chi

Code of Ethics

The SOCIETY of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi believes the duty of journalists is to serve the truth.

We BELIEVE the agencies of mass communication are carriers of public discussion and information, acting on their Constitutional mandate and freedom to learn and report the facts.

We BELIEVE in public enlightenment as the forerunner of justice, and in our Constitutional role to seek the truth as part of the public's right to know the truth.

We BELIEVE those responsibilities carry obligations that require journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy, and fairness.

To these ends, we declare acceptance of the standards of practice here set forth:

I. RESPONSIBILITY:

The public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a high trust.

II. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS:

Freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of people in a free society. It carries with it the freedom and the responsibility to discuss, question, and challenge actions and utterances of our government and of our public and private institutions. Journalists uphold the right to speak unpopular opinions and the privilege to agree with the majority.

III. ETHICS:

Journalists must be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know the truth.

1. Gifts, favors, free travel, special treatment or privileges can compromise the integrity of journalists and their employers. Nothing of value should be accepted.

2. Secondary employment, political involvement, holding public office, and service in community organizations should be avoided if it compromises the integrity of journalists and their employers. Journalists and their employers should conduct their personal lives in a manner that protects them from conflict of interest, real or apparent. Their responsibilities to the public are paramount. That is the nature of their profession.

3. So-called news communications from private sources should not be published or broadcast without substantiation of their claims to news values.

4. Journalists will seek news that serves the public interest, despite the obstacles. They will make constant efforts to assure that the public's business is conducted in public and that public records are open to public inspection.

5. Journalists acknowledge the newsman's ethic of protecting confidential sources of information.

6. Plagiarism is dishonest and unacceptable.

IV. ACCURACY AND OBJECTIVITY:

Good faith with the public is the foundation of all worthy journalism.

1. Truth is our ultimate goal.

2. Objectivity in reporting the news is another goal that serves as the mark of an experienced professional. It is a standard of performance toward which we strive. We honor those who achieve it.

3. There is no excuse for inaccuracies or lack of thoroughness.

4. Newspaper headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles they accompany. Photographs and telecasts should give an accurate picture of an event and not highlight an incident out of context.

5. Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue.

6. Partisanship in editorial comment that knowingly departs from the truth violates the spirit of American journalism.

7. Journalists recognize their responsibility for offering informed analysis, comment, and editorial opinion on public events and issues. They accept the obligation to present such material by individuals whose competence, experience, and judgment qualify them for it.

8. Special articles or presentations devoted to advocacy or the writer's own conclusions and interpretations should be labeled as such.

V. FAIR PLAY:

Journalists at all times will show respect for the dignity, privacy, rights, and well-being of people encountered in the course of gathering and presenting the news.

1. The news media should not communicate unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without giving the accused a chance to reply.

2. The news media must guard against invading a person's right to privacy.

3. The media should not pander to morbid curiosity about details of vice and crime.

4. It is the duty of news media to make prompt and complete correction of their errors.

5. Journalists should be accountable to the public for their reports and the public should be encouraged to voice its grievances against the media. Open dialogue with our readers, viewers, and listeners should be fostered.

VI. PLEDGE:

Adherence to this code is intended to preserve and strengthen the bond of mutual trust and respect between American journalists and the American people.

The Society shall--by programs of education and other means--encourage individual journalists to adhere to these tenets, and shall encourage journalistic publications and broadcasters to recognize their responsibility to frame codes of ethics in concert with their employees to serve as guidelines in furthering these goals.

CODE OF ETHICS
(Adopted 1926; revised 1973, 1984, 1987)

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The taming of the shrew: Women's magazines and the regulation of desire

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The taming of the shrew: Women's magazines and the regulation of desire

Love and sex are prominent and recurring themes in women's magazines: as McCracken (1993) has noted, these magazines "reach a broad spectrum of women with messages that conflate desire and consumerism" (p. 2). The most casual glance at the contents of any magazine in this genre, from *Cosmopolitan* to *Ladies' Home Journal* or *Seventeen*, inevitably yields a plethora of titles on these subjects that range from the banal to the exacting: "When he wants you to take charge in bed," "Cycles of desire: how couples reconnect," "Lust horizon: in search of sexual confidence," "How to make your man better in bed," and so on, ad infinitum.

Articles on love and sex in women's magazines are generally prescriptive, normative or explanatory in tone (Ilouz, 1991); they are intended, quite clearly, to guide readers in making decisions about their personal relationships. This tone is unremarkable in the tradition of women's magazines, which have, since their genesis in the mid-seventeenth century, sought to instruct women in appropriate conduct for living. That these magazines have been phenomenally successful in this aim is almost beyond question: women's magazines comprise the largest segment of the consumer magazine market and have been shown to be enormously influential in the socialization of women in contemporary Western society (cf. McCracken, 1993; Wolf, 1991; McRobbie, 1991; Ferguson, 1983; Friedan, 1963). In terms of this practice, women's magazines comprise part of a web of societal institutions that exercise a certain regulatory function in the governance of women's behavior, and, in particular, their sexuality.

A number of studies have examined the role of social institutions in the control of women's sexuality (cf. Tuana, 1993; Bartky, 1988; Dworkin, 1987; Brownmiller, 1976; Millett, 1969), but most of this work overlooks or trivializes the influence of mass culture in this process. In this respect, I would argue that a significant factor in this system of regulation and control is being neglected. Mass media messages play increasingly central roles in contemporary society. Kellner (1994) points out,

> Radio, television, film and the other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities, our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; of "us" and "them." Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, myths and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture. ... We are immersed from cradle to grave in a media and consumer society (p. 5)

In women's culture, consumer magazines hold a preeminent position. They are powerful representations of women's lives. McCracken (1993) notes,

> The ostensibly authoritative grand narrative of reality developed month after month in [women's magazines] appears to be a women-centered articulation of the world. Rendering thousands of aspects of everyday life as knowable, controllable entities, women's magazines suggest ... that an apparently comprehensive and straightforward detailing of the everyday can capture reality discursively for readers. ... [W]omen's

> magazines exert a cultural leadership to shape consensus in which highly pleasurable codes work to naturalize social relations of power" (pp. 2-3).

Because of their prominence in women's lives, the influence of these magazines in the shaping of women's psyches cannot be ignored. In this paper, I undertake a critical inquiry into the role that women's magazines play in the channeling of women's sexuality in socially prescribed directions. My aim is to demonstrate how discursive practices in women's magazines contribute to the negotiation of women's position in society.

The rules of desire: social discourse and female sexuality

Women's sexuality as a focus of intense societal scrutiny and regulation is a centuries-old phenomenon. In the third century BC, Aristotle argued that women were unable to control their passions sufficiently to lead good lives: left on their own, women would be led astray by their sexual drives. He concluded, therefore, that men— more rational and thus more capable of moral rectitude—needed to govern women's desires (Aristotle, tr. B. Jowett, 1984). This general belief has permeated Western thought since that time. Indeed, women's sexuality has, over the centuries, come to be seen as explosive and unnatural, a potential danger in need of the strictest (male) supervision. In the nineteenth century, Freud declared women's sexuality to be inherently repressive, resulting in "the greater proneness of women to neurosis and especially to hysteria," characteristics he declared to be, "intimately related to the essence of femininity" (Freud, 1949, p. 99). Writes historian and philosopher Nancy Tuana,

> The containment of woman in the private domain has long been seen as necessary for controlling the destructive effects of her

> passions on society. By limiting woman to the private realm and channeling her passions and emotions into the nurturance of the family, her passions were contained and thereby rendered harmless to the public order (1993, p. 167)

It will be noted that constructions of female sexuality in Western society have been developed and disseminated by men, and that even in the late twentieth century, when women began to challenge these constructions, patriarchal definitions of women's sexual attributes still formed the basis for theorizing. The paradigms used by "second-wave" feminists for conceptualizing women's sexuality were still premised on male-centered models and metaphors (see Davis, 1990). Challenging the discursive logic of these conceptualizations has thus become a pressing issue for many feminist scholars.

Discourse is, in fact, key to understanding sexuality in the world. This is not to say that sex and sexuality do not exist outside of discourse, but rather that these biological phenomena are given meaning through language. In the first volume of his treatise *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault suggests that "juridico-discursive" systems of power create and define the subjects they govern. These systems of power concentrate on the regulation of life forces in order to maintain the economy of material production. In the Foucauldian analysis, sexuality is not only socially constructed, it must be socially regulated in order to maintain hierarchies of dominance. A number of social institutions were, and are, involved in this regulation. Schools, the army, the family, the police, prisons, and others, contribute to the discipline of the body by participating in social discourse. In Foucault's construction, sex cannot exist outside of an institutionally supported rational "law" that creates and defines it. "Sex," writes Foucault, "is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (1990, p. 155).

Other theorists support this view of the use of social power to enforce sexual norms. Lorber (1994) writes,

> [S]exuality is likely to be organized with norms of appropriateness, if not with moral strictures, in the service of community interests. Democratic states may restrict the undue burdens they place on what citizens do with their bodies, but in the end, bodies belong as much to the community as they do the individual. ... Whoever has power in the community will be influential in determining what sexualities will have moral hegemony" (p. 79).

Deleuze and Guattari argued in *Anti-Oedipus* (1977) that desire is controlled and channeled by social regimes, because uncontrolled desire is revolutionary in its essence and threatens the structure of society. This control and channeling is effected, they say, through social codes: "To code desire ... is the business of the socius" (p. 139).

Women's magazines and the ideology of desire

Social discourse involves complex interactions among individuals and institutions. Various theorists have explicated the crucial role of mass media in representing dominant social ideologies through discourse as well as institutional structure (cf. Hall, 1980; Gerbner, 1985). In women's culture, women's magazines are powerful vehicles for the representation of ideology. "Women's magazines exist as a gender genre apart ... [T]hese journals are not merely reflecting the female role in society; they are also supplying one source of definitions of, and socialisation into, that role" (Ferguson, 1985, pp. 183, 185).

Recent examinations of magazines for young women indicate that their contents are geared to stereotypically traditional socialization messages for readers. McRobbie's landmark study of British girls' magazines found them to contain conventionally coded romantic narratives which could only create a neurotically dependent female subject in the reader (McRobbie, 1991). Kate Peirce's content analysis found that *Seventeen* magazine reinforced the notions that "[a] teenage girl ... should be concerned with her appearance, with finding a man to take care of her, and with learning to take care of a house" (Peirce, 1990, p. 499). Her later study of teenage magazine fiction (Peirce, 1993) revealed that few of the stories offered anything but traditional socialization messages. In more than half of the 104 stories analyzed, the main character depended on someone else to solve her problems; and almost half of the conflicts were about relationships with boys. "Through the stories, a teenage girl learns that male-female relationships are more important than just about anything, that she is not supposed to act or be aggressive or solve problems—others will do that for her—and that there really are male and female professions" (p. 65).

These empirical findings are consistent with the fact that while women's magazines allegedly create a "woman-centered" world, their contents have historically been predicated on prevailing, male-derived notions of femininity. The first women's magazines were published, edited and written by men, and were developed as part of

> a sustained campaign to impose a certain set of standards and values on the woman reader. Indeed, many writers regarded this as their *raison d'etre*, and intended their periodicals to be a

> medium through which they could criticise women and reclaim them by moral teaching. Thus the professed 'amusement' function of these early works was frequently subordinated to that of instruction. (White, 1970, p. 27)

Women's magazines of the late twentieth century maintain this function. "They tell women what to think and do about themselves, their lovers, husbands, parents, children, colleagues, neighbours or bosses. It is this, the scope of their normative direction, rather than the fact of its existence, which is truly remarkable," writes Marjorie Ferguson (1983, p. 2). Clearly, consumer women's magazines operate as institutions of power in women's culture. While the editorial staffs of women's magazines nowadays comprise mostly female editors and writers, this analysis indicates that the ideological underpinnings of the magazines' texts on sex and desire conform to dominant social norms for women's sexuality.

Method

This analysis considered the three top-selling magazines for women aged 18-34. According to the latest statistics available from the Standard Rate and Data Service circulation figures, these are *Cosmopolitan* (circ. 2,741,784), *Glamour* (circ. 2,133,712), and *Seventeen* (1,873,039). I drew a random sample of these magazines from June 1994 to June 1995 and examined all the nonfiction articles (features as well as columns) on the topics of women's sexuality and/or desire that appeared in these issues. This yielded 36 articles for analysis.

The sample of magazines used here is limited in scope and cannot represent the entire genre of women's magazines. However, the sample served as a starting point for identifying ideological themes that I hope to investigate in more detail in future work, using a broader sample. For the purposes of generating some basic concepts and postulates about the construction of sexuality in women's magazines, the sample was adequate.

In analyzing the articles, my focus was on the ideological dimension of the written texts—the underlying logic supporting the explicit message, or what Veron (1971) called "the implicit or nonmanifest organization of the message." This would address an axiological and implicit dimension of discourse that poses some problems in terms of formal, systematic analysis. Traditional readings of discourse would differentiate between explicit and implicit meanings—"denotation" and "connotation," in semiotics—but as Heck (1980) has pointed out, the denotative level of discourse cannot really be distinguished from the connotative level: "ideological meanings are present in both processes" (p. 127). To try to get at this subsurface level of meaning, then, I looked at relationships among three characteristics of each article:

(1) the explicit theme, identified by the headline, cover line, summary or lead paragraph of the article,

(2) the social norm toward which the article was directed, as expressed by explicit arguments advocating or prescribing particular values or behaviors, and

(3) the assumptions underlying these themes and arguments.

Analysis

"Whether offered as the appearance of sex education in a magazine such as *Seventeen* or spurious sexual liberation in *Cosmopolitan*, the messages [in women's magazines] contain socially accepted moral values beneath the surface," writes Ellen McCracken (1993). In an earlier, intensive analysis of articles in British women's weeklies, Ferguson (1983) found that these magazines offered a contradictory construction of femininity: they simultaneously urged women to shed traditional roles and establish their independence while reminding women of the overarching imperative of 'finding' a man and achieving success as wives and mothers.

The same paradoxical construction of female sexuality was evident in my analysis. While many articles emphasized women's freedom and self-determination in terms of seeking out sexual partners and expressing sexuality, the construction of that very sexuality involved submitting to male desire.

In general, cover lines and headlines focused on the active pursuit of men's sexual attention. "Hey, you don't have to act dependent to hold a man. Clingy is out!," announced a cover line from *Cosmopolitan* (January 1995). Another cover line in the same issue advocated, "Giving him a night to remember." The October 1994 cover of *Cosmo* featured the headline, "How to handle a brand new man." Ferguson (1983) noted "the primacy and constancy of Man as goal" in British women's weeklies. In this analysis, also, interaction with a male partner emerged as the single most prominent and overt theme. Many articles' headlines and cover lines involved attracting and retaining male sexual partners—e.g. "How to hold a man by giving him his freedom" (*Cosmopolitan*, July 1994)—while others focused on the goal of marriage—e.g. "From love to marriage: how men get there" (*Glamour*, January 1994), "How to tell if you'll want him for life" (*Glamour*, November 1994), "Why won't he marry me? Because he's getting it for free" (*Cosmopolitan*, January 1995). The table of contents summary of another article from *Cosmopolitan* ("A week in the life of a single working woman," November 1994) mentioned marriage as an implicit but unmistakable goal:

"Twenty-four and not-*yet*-wed, this New York City media assistant shares a chapter from her personal diary ..."

Monogamous, heterosexual relationships were explicit themes in every single article: the male partner was often identified in the headline—"How a *guy* knows he's in love" (*Seventeen*, October 1994), "Eight things never to say to a *man* you love" (*Glamour*, September 1994), "I don't want *him*, you can't have *him*: When your ex remarries" (*Cosmopolitan*, October 1994) [italics mine].

This emphasis on seeking out or retaining male partners had various ramifications, one of which was an emphasis on women being sexually active in the service of men. (Celibacy or any other sexual preference was not an option.) In a November 1994 *Cosmopolitan* article, women were given ways to help men achieve multiple orgasms. "Conveying *your* genuine interest in *his* pleasure is key," advised *Cosmo*. "Experiment with your lover to find out what thrills *him* ... If you are unable to discover on your own what does and does not work for you and your man, many clinics ... offer programs for couples" (pp. 198-199).

The November 1994 issue of *Cosmopolitan* featured the article, "The surprising things men find sexy," which included, "Those little pouts and other things women do with their mouths when they put on lipstick," "The combination of tiny underpants and big sweat socks," "The look of women when they're glistening wet—like if they've just come out of the pool or the ocean," "A strand of pearls and a tan. Nothing else." The comments were all provided by men with the implication that women needed to adopt those standards in order to attract male desire.

A *Glamour* article titled, "Sex in real life" ran the subtitle, "How men rate marriage" (May 1994) and presents, from a man's point of view, the decline in sexual passion that supposedly follows marriage. The solution proposed is increased "creativity" in order to stimulate sexual desire:

> When you're married, you're freer to indulge your fantasies or expose your secret wishes—although it involves a certain willful suspension of disbelief. A spouse, after all, is many things: a business partner, a best friend, even a brother or a sister. Who wants to make love to a business partner or a best friend—or especially to your brother or sister? Lovemaking in marriage requires more imagination, perhaps, than it did when you were single ... (p. 288)

This imperative of sexual activity was perhaps the most interesting theme in the articles, because of the way sex was characterized. Davis (1990) has pointed out that the common metaphor for sexuality in Western society is hunger, or insatiable lack. But she characterizes this as a male-centered construction: "[M]en's sexuality has been construed this way only through a particular social organization of body and a particular aesthetic of sex and power. Sex-as-desire and desire-as-hunger have been socially organized and individualized, creating the interior experience and terrain of sexuality" (p. 6). But women's sexuality is not like hunger, she argues. It is interesting to note that in *Cosmopolitan*, sex and desire (whether men's or women's) were characterized only in terms of the "hunger" or "insatiable lack" paradigm, but that in the other two publications—*Seventeen* and *Glamour*— while male sexuality held to the sex-as-hunger metaphor, a different, but equally male-centered paradigm was evident for women's sexuality: what I will call the "pure woman" paradigm. I will consider each of these models in turn.

Cosmopolitan's construction of desire involves tutoring women in aggressive strategies for voracious sexual appetites. "Sometimes, there is nothing so exhilarating as fast, frenzied sex," writes Carol Weston in the July 1994 *Cosmopolitan*. "Sex that is unplanned, impetuous, impulsive ... You must have him now, on the kitchen floor. Or now, on the sofa in the den. If you're in heat and in a hurry, the solution is the quickie. What are you waiting for?" (pp. 77-78). Another article (*Cosmopolitan*, June 1994) urges women to "ravish" men. "Women can take sexually, too, and men can be taken ... Taking charge unleashes something in [a woman]. The hidden tigress comes out. She gets wild and wonderfully out of control when she's playing a dominant role ... [S]he is capable of turning him on when he doesn't even realize that's what he wants" (pp. 162-163). Dimensions more characteristic of women's sexuality—what Davis describes as "more relational, contextual, emotional responses" (1990, p. 5)—are not addressed in *Cosmopolitan* articles about sex.

Glamour and *Seventeen*, however, take different approaches. *Glamour* inevitably conflates sex and romantic love, and the sexual norm upheld in this magazine is women's accommodation to men's sexual needs. In one story, "Cycles of desire" (April 1994), cases were cited in which women adapted themselves or changed themselves in order to match their male partners' sexual requirements. This adaptation was seen as highly appropriate:

> Brenda admitted that she often felt lonely during sex. She knew Gene was an avid reader of pornography magazines, although she had never before realized how much this bothered her. "Sometimes when we made love, I would be suspicious that it wasn't *me* in bed with him—that he was playing out some fantasy in his head," she says. Over a period of months, alone and with their counselor, they discussed how to make sex both

> safe and exciting for each other. They agreed that Gene didn't have to give up his magazines, but that he would let Brenda know, through his words and actions, that he was with her. A year after they began couples counseling, the two reported making love more regularly … (p. 227)

In another case in the same article, "Wendy" experienced sexual problems as a result of having been raped. "Though Peter offered to go to couples therapy with her, Wendy decided instead to join a support group for rape survivors … Wendy says their lovemaking is very satisfying now because 'I'm not holding back. We've been making up for two years' lost time!'" (p. 282).

Glamour's treatment of sexual relationships mirrors Carol Gilligan's picture of a feminine sensibility in which "women … try to change the rules in order to preserve relationships, men, in abiding by these rules, depict relationships as easily replaced" (1982, p. 44).

In *Seventeen*, male sexuality is generally constructed according to the "insatiable lack" model. "Guys can pressure girls in all kinds of ways, from the subtle 'you would if you loved me' to the not-so-subtle 'do it or I'll find someone who will,'" cautions Debra Kent in "Sex and your body" (February 1994, p. 63). This monthly column consistently advises *Seventeen*'s female readers to resist such advances, cautioning them to control their sexual feelings. Male sexuality is generally mystified and demonized in this magazine. "It seems like guys are on a different planet when it comes to their ideas about sex," writes Rebecca Barry in a May 1995 *Seventeen* article (pp. 84-86). She goes on to provide a typology of men who will find various cunning ways to pressure girls into having sex; within each category, girls are given strategies for resistance. In *Seventeen*, virginity is highly regarded and its readers are urged to take measures to safeguard it until the right man arrives to claim it. "Having sexual feelings and having sex are two really different things. Sexual feelings just happen—it's not like you have any control over them. But you have total control over having sex. And just because you're thinking about sex doesn't mean that you're ready for it ... " (April 1995, p. 102).

One final note of interest pertains to the fact that a number of articles in the sample were written by men. These articles invariably focused on male criteria for women's desirability. Although only feature stories were analyzed in this study, it is worth noting that all three magazines ran monthly columns written by men—"Guy Talk" and "Bob Love" in *Seventeen*, "Men Right Now" and "Jake" in *Glamour*, and "His Point of View" in *Cosmopolitan*. The subject of all of these columns was male-female relationships from a male perspective.

Discussion

Four main themes were evident in the magazines' constructions of women's sexuality:

(1) the presumption of heterosexuality

(2) the goal of marriage or heterosexual monogamy

(3) the oppositional tension between the imperative of free sexual expression and the need to submit to men's desire

(4) the male-centered construction of women's desire as either insatiable lack or a passion in need of strict control.

These themes present a confusing and complicated picture of female sexuality, yet they all make sense within a patriarchal frame of reference. The notion of compulsory heterosexuality carries with it "a relation of radical nonreciprocity between men and women" (Butler, 1990, p. 41). The social matrix that mandates heterosexuality "accounts for all desire for women by subjects of whatever sex or gender as originating in a masculine, heterosexual position. The libido-as-masculine is the source from which all possible sexuality is presumed to come" (Butler, 1990, p. 53). Thus, a system of presumptive heterosexuality locates women as objects of male desire, especially in a social context where masculinity is privileged—i.e., the society in which we live.

In a context where heterosexual relationships are the prescribed norm, the corollary goal of marriage is understandable. Marriage has long held a central position in the social order. Structuralism informs us that marriage originated as a means for men to establish a cultural identity: women served as objects of exchange through which patronyms were differentiated or joined (Lévi-Strauss, 1969). Nancy Tuana (1993) writes,

> The Greeks believed that the animal passions inherent in woman's nature could best be tamed through marriage. A proper union would domesticate woman by ensuring that her passions were properly controlled and directed toward the welfare of her family. Her sexuality would be limited to her husband; her passions would be directed to the care of her children. (p. 156).

Deleuze and Guattari identify marriage as a social institution that regulates desire for the benefit of men: "Through women, men establish their own connections; through the man-woman disjunction, which is always the outcome of filiation, alliance places in connection men from different filiations" (1977, p. 165). Although Giddens (1992) contends that marriage is losing its place as the basic social unit, Ilouz (1991) has pointed out that capitalist societies need the powerful ideology of romantic love and pair-bonding in order to justify the social reorganization necessary to support the economy of production. It would seem, therefore, that even if legal marriage is losing its primacy, the social order still requires monogamous pairing. In promoting this norm, women's magazines uphold a traditional social system of economic dominance and hierarchy.

The contradictory construction of women's sexuality in terms of sexual expression and sexual submission has been the subject of much comment from feminist scholars. In the Lacanian psychoanalytic conceptualization, women exist sexually only as objects of male desire. To fulfill this role, they must seduce and entice men, and must be sexually affirmed by men.

> [L]ove relations involve an unresolved tension between demand and desire. When the woman functions in the register of demand, it is to the man, his attentions, affections, and his capacity to reflect her and give her identity, that her demands are addressed. But when she functions in the register of desire, she desires (to be) the phallus. This entails that she is treated as a sexual subject by the other, undermining her demand for recognition as a subject (Grosz, 1990, pp. 135-136).

This contradiction creates a psychic conflict that is exacerbated in women's magazines by their subscription to this characterization of the female role in a sexual relationship.

The fourth theme—the construction of women's desire as either insatiable lack or potential threat in need of control—is a corollary of this paradox. Women's desire has long been regarded as a dangerous quantity in need of male governance, so when *Glamour* and *Seventeen* urge their women readers to control their sexual feelings and parry men's advances, they are merely reflecting social norms that have been in place for several centuries. The construction of female sexuality in *Cosmopolitan*, however, has a different genesis and history. *Cosmopolitan* was launched in the late 1960s when America was in the throes of the "sexual revolution." Using the rhetoric of that "revolution," *Cosmo* supported the idea of "sexual liberation," constructing sexuality as "self-motivated, driven, active, unattached, demanding, free ... like men's" (Davis, 1990, p. 5). This masculinist model of sexuality tells women that they can exercise their sexuality in the same way that men do. But, writes McCracken,

> Many of *Cosmopolitan's* sexually daring pieces are based on male fantasies about women that have habitually structured women's view of their own sexuality. Thus, although much of *Cosmopolitan's* editorial matter appears on the surface to counter traditionally accepted social values, it ultimately upholds many of them. (1993, p. 162)

Suggestions for future research

A more extensive study of women's magazines needs to be undertaken to determine whether the ideological themes found in this study are characteristic of the genre. In particular, the so-called "seven sisters"—*Redbook, Good Housekeeping, Family Circle, Woman's Day, McCall's, and Better Homes and Gardens*—whose circulations make up the bulk of all women's magazines sold in the United States, should be included in the analysis.

Conclusion

Women's magazines are a powerful institution in the socialization of women in the United States. They purport to present a woman-centered world view, yet the ideological underpinnings of their constructions of female sexuality conform to rigid and traditional norms. These constructions position women as objects of male desire and underscore women's subordinate position in contemporary society. By contrast, in a study of British girls' magazines, McRobbie (1994) found that the magazines did not contain a "seamless text of oppressive meanings held together by ideology," but rather that there were "disruptions and inconsistencies and spaces for negotiation within the magazines" (p. 163). However, the magazines used in this study—*Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Seventeen*—left no room for such negotiation in their treatment of women's sexuality.

The French philosopher Luce Irigaray (1985) has identified discourse as a primary factor in the constitution of female identity in Western society. She argues that male-centered structures of language and thought have always defined female sexuality. "The sexes are now defined only as they are determined in and through language. Whose laws, it must not be forgotten, have been prescribed by male subjects for centuries" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 87). Therefore, "it is indeed ... discourse that we have to challenge, and disrupt, inasmuch as this discourse sets forth the law for all others" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 74).

In light of women's magazines' maintenance of patriarchal standards for women's sexuality, it is imperative that women begin to challenge and disrupt the discourses in these publications with the goal of ending the channeling of women's desires in prescribed and socially "safe" directions.

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COMMUNITARIAN JOURNALISM(S):
CLEARING THE CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE

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Abstract

The idea and term "communitarianism" have figured prominently in recent discussions of political theory and public philosophy and of normative press theory. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to advance discussion of press theory by clarifying the contrasting ways the concept has been discussed in works by Altschull, Lambeth -- and, most extensively, Christians, Ferre, and Fackler, whose Good News represents a major departure philosophically from previous press theories.

COMMUNITARIAN JOURNALISM(S):
CLEARING THE CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE

The word and concept of "communitarianism" have figured prominently in recent discussions of political theory and public philosophy, and of normative press theory. However, uses of the term have varied widely. The authors of one article in political theory, moved by what they saw as a lack of conceptual clarity, titled their piece "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique: A Guide for the Perplexed."[1] Literature in the last three years on press theory and practice has used the term and idea in connection with a variety of perspectives, including Marxism and views sympathetic to the classical liberal tradition.

This paper does not call for a uniform definition of the term, but it attempts to clarify the distinctive ways the word and concept have been discussed in three works from the past three years relevant to press theory: Altschull's Agents of Power[2], Lambeth's Committed Journalism[3], and -- most extensively -- Christians, Ferre, and Fackler's Good News[4].

This study is significant for three reasons:

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[1] Patrick Neal and David Paris, "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique: A Guide for the Perplexed," Canadian Journal of Political Science 23 (September 1990): 419-39.

[2] J. Herbert Altschull, Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy, 2d ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995).

[3] Edmund B. Lambeth, Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[4] Clifford G. Christians, John P. Ferre and P. Mark Fackler, Good News: Social Ethics and the Press (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

1. The notion of communitarian journalism, at least as expressed in Good News, represents a major departure philosophically from previous, liberalism-based press theories.

2. Communitarianism, as the discussion of literature below will detail, is an important strand in current debates in political theory and public philosophy -- which form part of the larger context for press theory and practice.

3. Individualism, which communitarianism challenges, has long been a powerful strand in American life. Robert Bellah and his colleagues contend that individualism partially rooted in John Locke has shaped the entire history of the United States: It intensified in the nineteenth century and persists today even against the backdrop of massive social institutions.[5] In American journalism, individualism manifests itself in what is sometimes near-absolute devotion to the First Amendment (important as it is) for fear of a chilling effect on journalistic practice.[6]

This paper's effort at conceptual clarity has the potential to help advance discussion of normative press theory by looking both at communitarian-oriented press theory and its broader philosophical context. After an overview of communitarianism in this broader context and of the three works in press theory as they introduce the term or idea of communitarianism, this paper will draw distinctions among the three works by briefly examining:

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[5] This argument is a key theme of Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, The Good Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

[6] Philip Meyer, Ethical Journalism (New York: Longman, 1987), 8-10.

1. The locus of each view on a continuum between emphasis on the collective and emphasis on the individual.

2. The philosophical roots of each view.

3. The view's relationship to current political theory, based on an important distinction Neal and Paris[7] draw.

4. The view's relationship to earlier normative press theories.

Communitarian Critiques of Liberalism

Theoretical issues that have been raised since the time of Locke in the 17th century endure in the 1990s in the debate between proponents of liberalism and communitarianism -- or, perhaps more accurately, among scholars at various places on a continuum between the two.[8] Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift state that such debates became central in political theory "during the 1980s and continue, in one way or another, to inform a great deal of contemporary theory."[9] Similar debates are also being carried on by sociologists -- Robert Bellah and his colleagues (all but one of whom are sociologists by training) and Amitai Etzioni.

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[7] Neal and Paris, "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique."

[8] Among the various contemporary meanings of liberalism, I intend it in the sense often meant by political theory, emphasizing the individual and her or his rights. Anthony Arblaster, in The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 15, writes: "The metaphysical and ontological core of liberalism is individualism. It is from this premise that the familiar liberal commitments to freedom, tolerance and individual rights are derived."

Daniel Bell, discussing four scholars often identified as communitarians, states a definition of communitarianism that is broad enough to cover many overlapping perspectives, noting that these four are united by "the view that liberalism does not sufficiently take into account the importance of community for personal identity, moral and political thinking, and judgements about our well-being in the contemporary world."[10] Beyond this very general definition, different people identified as communitarian critics of liberalism have put forth a wide variety of theories. Neal and Paris, in contending that the liberal-communitarian debate has lacked conceptual clarity,[11] have distinguished between criticisms of liberalism that focus on a lack of community in liberal societies and criticisms that focus on liberal societies as the wrong type of community. "Criticisms of the first type typically take as their object *the actual practices* of liberal *societies*," they say, citing Bellah et al's Habits of the Heart[12] as an example. "Criticisms of the second type typically take as their object particular political *theories* advanced by 'liberal' theorists," they state on the other hand, citing Michael Sandel's work[13] as an example.[14] Less systematically, a recent piece in *The Economist* draws similar distinctions, referring to "low communitarians" such as Etzioni who emphasize political reform without aggressively challenging the liberal state, and "high communitarians" such as Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre; the second school "rejects the western liberal tradition explicitly" but generally does not pursue political activity.[15]

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[9] Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, Liberals and Communitarians (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), vii.

[10] Daniel Bell, Communitarianism and Its Critics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 4.

[11] Neal and Paris, 421-22.

[12] Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

Who are the leading communitarians? Five recent sources discussing communitarianism[16] mention each of the following at least twice: MacIntyre, Sandel, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, Benjamin Barber, and Bellah and his colleagues. Derek Phillips notes the wide attention that Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* has received, and quotes Christopher Lasch as saying, "No other book has done so much to bring the communitarian critique of liberalism to general attention."[17] Etzioni did not receive the scholarly attention these others did, but his book The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda[18] probably appeared too late to be noted -- and he has focused on spearheading a social movement, not making a systematic theoretical case to scholars.[19] In fact, as of the writing of Bell's 1993 book, MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor, and Walzer had not identified themselves with this movement.[20]

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[13] See Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[14] Neal and Paris, 423.

[15] "Freedom and Community: The Politics of Restoration," *The Economist*, 24 December 1994/6 January 1995 [no author]. Charles Taylor contends that the liberal-communitarian debate has obscured differences between ontological arguments that theorists make, concerning the factors that account for social life, and the advocacy of political or moral stances. See Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 159-82.

[16] Bell; Mulhall and Swift; Neal and Paris; Derek L. Phillips, *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Robert Thigpen and Lyle Downing, "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (August 1987): 637-55.

To help lay the foundation for the press theory discussion that follows, I will briefly examine the perspectives of one "high" communitarian, Sandel, and one group of "low" communitarians, Bellah and his colleagues.

Sandel's "High" Communitarianism

Mulhall and Swift state that Sandel's 1982 book Liberalism and the Limits of Justice "first elicited the label

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[17] Phillips, 4, citing Christopher Lasch, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," Soundings 49 (Spring/Summer 1986): 61.

[18] Amitai Etzioni, The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993).

[19] A group of 15 ethicists, social philosophers, and social scientists met in 1990 at the invitation of Etzioni and William Galston and adopted the name Communitarian (capital C). In 1991 they introduced a quarterly journal, The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities, issued a platform, and publicized it (Etzioni, 14-18). Etzioni calls for "a moratorium on the minting of most, if not all, new rights" and for the re-establishment of "the link between rights and responsibilities" (Ibid., 4).

[20] Bell, 4.

'communitarian' and brought about the retrospective recruitment of other writers to that flag."[21] His work is therefore foundational for understanding the theoretical critique of liberalism by communitarians.[22]

Communitarian theorists object to liberal political theory's concept of the person, which they believe wrongly views people as being distinct from their conceptions of the good. This "ignores the extent to which people are constituted as the people that they are precisely by those conceptions themselves."[23]

Sandel's critique along these lines pivots around the liberalism of John Rawls.[24] The liberalism of Rawls gives ontological priority to the self's "moral power" to choose and pursue a conception of the good.[25] "Of fundamental importance on the Rawlsian scheme are not the conceptions of the good that people have but something that lies behind such conceptions, their freedom to decide upon their own conceptions of the good, to act upon, and to change those decisions."[26]

However, for Sandel, this perspective "fails plausibly to account for certain indispensable aspects of our moral experience. For [Rawls'] deontology insists that we view ourselves as independent selves, independent in the sense that our identity is never tied to our aims and attachments."[27] In contrast, Sandel argues that we understand ourselves partly in terms of these aims and attachments; they are inseparable from who we are "as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic."[28] The understanding of the self that Rawls holds leaves no room, Sandel argues, for the exercise of character, reflectiveness, and friendship that actually occurs in our lives.[29] And it makes consideration of particular ends or goods arbitrary.[30]

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[21] Mulhall and Swift, 40.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 10.

[24] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). Mulhall and Swift's summary of Sandel's views, 40-69, centers on the concept of the person in Rawls and Sandel.

[25] Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," Journal of Philosophy 77 (1980): 544, cited in Sandel, 179.

[26] Mulhall and Swift, 6.

This summary of Sandel's views, though only cursory, points to the fact that the differences between his views and those of liberal theorists are deeper than societal practice; they lie in the way in which the individual selves and their web of connections with the others who make up a community are constituted.[31]

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[27] Sandel, 179.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 179-81.

[30] Ibid., 180.

[31] Viewing Sandel as a high communitarian is appropriate given the spectrum of communitarian thinkers. But Mulhall and Swift argue that Sandel's communitarianism is actually less thoroughgoing than MacIntyre's and Taylor's because he sees "constitutive attachments to the community" as only "*one* important species of human good" (162).

Bellah and His Colleagues' Communitarianism

In both Habits of the Heart and The Good Society, Bellah and his fellow scholars pursue arguments that lie closer to the grain of societal practice. Still, while not grounded explicitly in political theory, they refer to the liberalism of John Locke and the theme of individualism in American life that they see as being partially rooted in Locke. In Habits, the focus is on "cultural and personal resources for thinking about our common life"; in The Good Society, it is on institutions.

In Habits, the authors state that the book's "central problem" relates to American individualism. They fear that individualism "may have grown cancerous -- that it may be destroying those social integuments that Tocqueville saw as moderating its more destructive potentialities, that it may be threatening the survival of freedom itself."[32]

These authors see individualism as lying at the core of the American identity.[33] The individualism of Locke bears fruit indirectly in the twentieth century in a culture defined by types the authors call "the manager and the therapist." The autonomous individual is at the center of this culture, ready to make commitments based on "the criterion of life-effectiveness as the individual judges it."[34] Bellah and his colleagues worry that individuals living by this ethos are unable to sustain even private, let alone public, life.[35]

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[32] Bellah et al, Habits, viii.

[33] Ibid., 142.

In The Good Society, the authors shift their focus from individuals to institutions.[36] Interestingly, they eschew the *term* "communitarian" because of concern that it suggests they oppose the "larger structures" of society. In elaborating, they point to a central argument of The Good Society: "Indeed, it is our sense that only greater citizen participation in the large structures of the economy and the state will enable us to surmount the deepening problems of contemporary social life."[37] They contend that Americans "need to understand how much of our lives is lived in and through institutions, and how better institutions are essential if we are to lead better lives." They hold out hope that more effective thinking about institutions can help in addressing both social problems and "problems of emptiness and meaninglessness in our personal lives,"[38] and help to cultivate "the good society" that they seek, borrowing the term from Walter Lippmann's 1937 book by the same title.[39]

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[34] Ibid., 47.

[35] Ibid., 143.

[36] The Good Society does not equate institutions with organizations. "In its formal sociological definition, an institution is a pattern of expected action of individuals or groups enforced by social sanctions, both positive and negative" (p. 10). A family is one example (p. 40).

[37] Bellah et al, The Good Society, 6.

[38] Ibid., 5.

However, individualism again poses a problem: "the culture of individualism makes the very idea of institutions inaccessible to many of us," and we often hold the false idea that institutions are in opposition to individuals.[40] Bellah et al's notion of the good society includes freedom, but this must be not merely negative freedom:

> Freedom must exist within and be guaranteed by institutions, and must include the right to participate in the economic and political decisions that affect our lives. Indeed, the great classic criteria of a good society -- peace, prosperity, freedom, justice -- all depend today on a new experiment in democracy, a newly extended and enhanced set of democratic institutions, within which we citizens can better discern what we really want and what we ought to want to sustain a good life on this planet for ourselves and the generations to come.[41]

The authors, arguing that we and our institutions shape each other, link the view of institutions as "objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives" of individuals to "classical liberal" elevation of autonomy.[42]

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[39] Ibid., 7.

[40] Ibid., 6.

[41] Ibid., 9.

[42] Ibid., 12. Bellah et al. argue that the classical liberal Locke has profoundly influenced "our current understanding of social reality." At least as Americans came to understand it, his teaching "promised an unheard-of degree of individual freedom, an unlimited opportunity to compete for material well-being, and an unprecedented limitation on the arbitrary powers of government to interfere with individual initiative" (67). Although Americans appropriated a Lockean view of the world in the nineteenth century, the rise of the corporation, the world economic system, and eventually the "defense state" placed large institutions in a dominant role. But Americans "still have a Lockean political

Bellah et al's communitarianism, then, emphasizes adjustments to liberal society, not a wholesale transformation of it. However, in stressing the need to build society's integuments, their thinking embodies the spirit of both philosophically and practically oriented strands of communitarianism.

"Communitarian" Views in Press Philosophy

Lambeth

In Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession, Lambeth sets his discussion of a kind of communitarian journalism in the context of a concern for "Journalism and the Civic Culture." In his final chapter, by that title, Lambeth frames his arguments partly in terms of the concerns of Habits of the Heart for cultivating community, though he argues that Habits "seriously neglects the tradition of free expression not only as a means to foster community but to help define it."[43] The viewpoint of Habits that the liberal tradition represents negative, not positive, freedom ignores the importance of classical liberalism's protection of free inquiry, by which community is in part constituted.[44]

Lambeth argues, "Journalism's role in fostering the public

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culture" (70-77, 79).

[43] Lambeth, 189.

[44] Ibid., 202.

good can be strengthened by following political scientist Glenn Tinder's lead in defining community, in part at least, as dialogical inquiry."[45] Lambeth contends that journalists need to recognize that theirs is "a communitarian enterprise" in that they "depend on the cooperation of others." He believes that, "If consciously viewed and practiced in such communitarian terms, vigorous and independent journalism might come to have more supporters."[46]

Journalists can embrace community as Tinder defines it by practicing "stewardship of free expression," Lambeth says.

> By cultivating and pursuing standards of excellence in the craft of reporting and interpretation, the journalist acquires the truth-telling ability to stimulate and assist the inquiry of fellow citizens. Done with courage, skill, and imagination, journalism can expand the boundaries of common inquiry.[47]

Lambeth thus argues for communitarianism of a kind that emphasizes dialogically oriented inquiry between journalists and the public.

Altschull

Altschull, in the new second edition of his Agents of Power, uses the term "communitarian" in his symphonic model for classifying the world press. The communitarian movement of the symphony, including but not limited to the press of former communist nations, is placed alongside the "market" movement of capitalist nations and the "advancing" movement of developing nations.[48]

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[45] Ibid., 189, citing Glenn Tinder, Community: Reflections on a Tragic Ideal (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

[46] Lambeth, 189-90.

[47] Ibid., 203.

In a chapter titled "The Communitarian Press: The Role of Karl Marx,"[49] Altschull shows that he sees varieties of communitarianism historically or currently as ranging from early Christian communities to communist societies to Etzioni's communitarian movement. "Marxism does not equal communitarianism," he states, but adds:

> Marxism, as blended with Leninism and institutionalized in the Soviet Union, is the most highly developed form of communitarianism yet to have been practiced. Central to communitarianism and as stated directly under Marxism is the idea that institutions are (and ought to be) structured to work for the benefit of a selfless collective, tribal community rather than for the benefit of egoistic, personally motivated individuals. In both cases, the individual is required to yield his or her selfish freedom for the benefit of the community.[50]

Under Marx's conception, the press was to seek not just to report on the world but to change it by enlightening people about their enslavement to capitalism.[51] Expressing the communitarian symphonic movement's beliefs about the role of the press, Altschull states, "The press transforms and educates people to class and cultural consciousness."[52] Although the press in all three movements is to serve the people, the communitarian media, in their Marxist-Leninist embodiment, are to support the collectivist doctrine of the government and endorse its actions.[53] Altschull contrasts the goal of this strain of communitarianism with that of Etzioni, saying that Etzioni seeks not to change the world but to change public policy.[54]

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[48] Altschull, 418-39.

[49] Ibid., 195-208.

[50] Ibid., 197-98.

[51] Ibid., 201-6.

Altschull, then, recognizes communitarianism as encompassing a wide variety of perspectives with the common thread of emphasis on service to community rather than to self, but he focuses on the Marxist strand.

Christians et al.

Clifford Christians, John P. Ferre, and P. Mark Fackler, in Good News: Social Ethics and the Press, present a press theory explicitly grounded in communitarianism and sharply critical of liberal foundations. In their view, "The roots of Anglo-American news lie in the Enlightenment," which bequeathed to future journalists "a pervasive individual autonomy."[55] "Intellectually and sociologically, individual autonomy characterizes the classical liberal theory of the press."[56] They argue that Locke's "commitment to the sacred self" undergirded this theory, and that the idea in Anglo-American press theory of "free expression as a natural right" is also grounded in Locke.[57]

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[52] Ibid., 427.
[53] Ibid., 426.
[54] Ibid., 205.

[55] Christians et al, 18, 21.

[56] Ibid., 25.

However, the legacy of individual autonomy carried on through Mill and into the twentieth century is philosophically lacking, they contend. "Although individual rights and liberties ought surely to be respected, the philosophical task at this stage is to assign them their proper density, not allowing these weights to be determined by the existing social configurations or by an aggregate of personal preferences."[58]

In the place of a liberalism-based theory, Christians et al call for a theory grounded in communitarian thought, with the mission of the press becoming "civic transformation" rather than provision of information. "A revitalized citizenship shaped by community norms becomes the press's aim -- not merely readers and audiences provided with data, but morally literate persons."[59]

Communitarianism for Christians et al. thus emphasizes an active, even transformative, role for the press in society against the backdrop of a reassessment of political foundations. In its call for civic transformation, Good News finds common ground with the civic, or public, journalism movement, in which a fast-growing number of newspapers and broadcast stations, sometimes cooperating across the traditional print-electronic divide, have sought to foster new ties with the public, spur debate over community problems and solutions, and energize citizens to participate in public life. Jay Rosen has made a philosophical case for public journalism, arguing for a "duty of the press occasionally to *intervene* in public life in the interest of strengthening civic culture," thereby engaging people in public concern.[60]

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[57] Ibid., 26.

[58] Ibid., 41-44.

[59] Ibid., 89.

A Comparison of Communitarian Press Theories

The notions of communitarian journalism expressed in these three works can be usefully compared along four lines:

1. The locus of each view on a continuum between emphasis on the collective and emphasis on the individual. Understanding this distinction is important because, in the broader philosophical context, the individual-collective dichotomy has been central in the history of political theory and specifically in the liberal-communitarian debate. The distinction is important in the context of press theory because press theory, too, has pivoted, in part, on differences between individualistic theories such as John Merrill's[61] and community-oriented

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[60] Jay Rosen, "Public Journalism: First Principles," in Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt, Jr., Public Journalism: Theory and Practice (Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 1994), 9, 13. Merritt also makes the case for public journalism in Public Journalism and Public Life: Why Telling the News Is Not Enough (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).

[61] Although Merrill has moderated his views to some extent, the essence of his philosophy is still expressed in John C. Merrill, The Imperative of Freedom: A Philosophy of Journalistic

philosophies such as those expressed here.

Altschull's conception reflects a view that "places far greater emphasis on the well-being of the collective -- or society -- than on the individual."[62] Marxism, his dominant example of communitarianism, avowedly emphasized the collective.

Lambeth's, by contrast, emphasizes the individual in community. Dialogue based on freedom of inquiry is central, and this dialogue builds community, but the locus remains with the individual, not some collective built through mutual inquiry.

Christians et al.'s theory falls between these two in that its locus lies with neither the individual nor the community but in a relationship of mutuality between the two:

> Mutuality explains that human beings, to be truly human, are best understood as persons-in-relation who live simultaneously for others and for themselves. Neither persons nor their communities are paramount; their relationship is.[63]

Although this paper does not seek to make a choice among these perspectives, an examination of their place on the individual-collective continuum suggests that Lambeth's and

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Autonomy (New York: Hastings House, 1974; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990).

[62] Altschull, 207.

[63] Christians et al., 75-76. Frank G. Kirkpatrick, in Community: A Trinity of Models (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986), uses different terms: the atomistic/contractarian view of community, which he links to, among others, Hobbes and Locke; the organic/functional model (Hegel and Marx); and the mutual/personal model (Martin Buber). The atomistic/contractarian model could be viewed as lying at the individualist end of the continuum, with the organic/functional model at the collectivist end. The mutual/personal lies between the two -- as does Christians' et al's perspective.

Christians' et al's use of the term is more in keeping with the prevailing use of the term in political theory and public philosophy than Altschull's. Both "high" and "low" communitarians use the term -- or see it used by others assessing their work -- in a less collectivist sense than Altschull's. Although he allows for other brands of communitarianism, Altschull inappropriately applies the idea primarily to Marxism and produces a form of communitarianism in which the individual and his or her freedom are subsumed in the collective. In contrast, Lambeth and Christians et al leave fuller room for the individual, though not in absolute ontological or political priority.

2. The philosophical roots of each view. Understanding the philosophical foundations of these perspectives is important because it aids critical evaluation of these views in the context of both broader theory and press philosophy.

Altschull's notion of communitarianism allows for a variety of philosophical groundings. His allusion to early Christian communities suggests that communitarian journalism could conceivably grow out of theological convictions. Or in the case of Etzioni, it could grow out of philosophical or practical critiques of modern individual-oriented liberalism. However, as noted, he emphasizes Marxism because of the decades-long attempts to put it or its hybrids into practice in societies.

Lambeth, though referring to Bellah, finds deeper roots for his notion of communitarian journalism in the classical liberal tradition of thinkers such as Locke and Mill. In his view, the authors of Habits of the Heart appear to take the First Amendment for granted and "to dismiss the classical liberal tradition ... and to neglect its uses in building a workable concept of community."[64] Lambeth points to the influence of Locke on American "political institutions, including the press, to this day" and views the works of Mill, Locke, and the liberal tradition as "towering contributions to stable and free communities. Habits, by largely ignoring them, builds a table with a missing leg."[65]

Christians et al. approach their communitarian philosophy from a background that includes theology[66], and they allude to the agape love expressed in the teaching of Christianity[67]. The authors' discussion of communitarian thought is also grounded by references to a broad array of philosophically oriented communitarians involved in recent political theory debates, including Sandel, Taylor, and Walzer. Their case for communitarian social philosophy draws on Sandel to argue for the primacy of concern for the common good over concern about rights.[68]

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[64] Lambeth, 196-97.

[65] Ibid., 200, 202.

[66] Christians et al., xii.

[67] Ibid., 69.

[68] Ibid., 45-46.

In their extended argument about foundations in the final chapter, Christians and his co-authors argue philosophically for a universal principle of "the sacredness of human dignity."[69] Among the foundations of their argument for a universal grounding for norms is work by Hans Jonas, who, as they summarize, argues for "the preservation of life as the ground for human responsibility."[70]

Even a brief overview makes it clear that Good News has deep philosophical grounding. But in their development of this grounding in counterpoint to classical liberalism, the authors press too far in dismissing Locke as radically individualist. Locke makes it clear in his Second Treatise[71] that his political theory does not ignore concern for the good of the community. He sees the end of political power as "the Publick Good."[72] Elsewhere, he states that "the end of government" is "the good of the Community"[73] or "the good of Mankind."[74] Although Locke's own grounding of his theory in natural law and theology is problematic in the late twentieth century, it is wrong to characterize his theory as wholly radically individualist.[75]

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[69] Ibid., 178.

[70] Ibid., 174-75.

[71] John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, student edition, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[72] Second Treatise, Section 3, p. 268.

[73] Ibid., Section 163, p. 376.

[74] Ibid., Section 229, p. 417.

3. The view's relationship to current political theory, based on an important distinction Neal and Paris draw. As noted, Neal and Paris draw a distinction between communitarians who focus on a lack of community in liberal societies (emphasizing actual practices) and those who focus on liberal societies as the wrong type of community (emphasizing political theories). Understanding this distinction provides further help in placing these theories in the context of broader political theory.

Altschull lands on both sides of the divide. He leaves room for Etzioni's political reformism, which targets a lack of community in one liberal society, the United States. However, by focusing on Marxism, Altschull emphasizes a collectivist-oriented type of community that differs sharply from those conceived of in liberal societies.

Lambeth, as evidenced in his sympathy (not uncritically) for Bellah's work, looks at communitarianism in the sense of a lack of community. For him, inquiry would bolster connectedness in liberal society.

Christians et al., in making an extended argument for changes in press practice to build community, are contending that this community is lacking. More deeply, however, they are also saying that liberal society itself needs to be reconstructed around the principle of mutuality: a new type of community needs to be created.

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[75] Bellah and his colleagues do as much in Habits of the Heart but treat Locke and his legacy in a more nuanced way in The Good Society.

4. The view's relationship to earlier normative press theories. Clearly, it is important for media scholars to set these views, all focused on the role of the press, in the context of other perspectives on that role. Again, this provides firmer ground for critical evaluation.

These three recent works can usefully be set in the context of Four Theories of the Press[76] and other work that developed social responsibility theory beginning with the Hutchins Commission report.[77] One rationale for doing this lies in the fact that Altschull, Lambeth, and Christians et al all respond to this line of works -- Altschull declaring the term "social responsibility" meaningless,[78] Lambeth criticizing social responsibility theory (specifically in Hutchins) as not offering practical guidance,[79] and Christians et al arguing that it went beyond more individualistic views but lacked theoretical sophistication.[80]

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[76] Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

[77] Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); Wilbur Lang Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper, 1957); William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm, and Clifford G. Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communication, 3d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

[78] Altschull, 444-48.

[79] Lambeth, 7.

Altschull's definition of communitarianism cannot be placed squarely within one of the four theories because it allows for considerable variation, but Marxism would clearly have dovetailed with the Soviet Communist theory of the press discussed in Four Theories.[81]

Lambeth remains in the liberal tradition that formed the backdrop for the libertarian theory of the press.[82] However, his emphasis on community places him more in line with social responsibility theory,[83] despite his criticism of it. His Committed Journalism does not represent -- nor does it claim to represent -- a radical departure from existing press theory; among its primary goals is to supply the practical guidance he saw as lacking in the Hutchins literature.

In contrast, the theory in Good News departs sharply and consciously from even the socially oriented press theory of the Hutchins-Four Theories line.[84] Not merely public service but "civic transformation" becomes the "occupational norm" of the press.[85] As the authors summarize:

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[80] Christians et al, 37-38.

[81] Siebert, 105-46.

[82] Ibid., 39-72.

[83] Ibid., 73-104.

[84] Christians et al., x.

[85] Ibid., 14.

> A press devoted to the telos of civic transformation aims to liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog, and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with our universal humanity.[86]

For Christians and his colleagues, then, the press is to assume a role in which changing society is not merely a sometime goal or a byproduct of investigative reporting, but is a central duty.

In considering Altschull's notion of a communitarian press, it is important to note that he is not proposing this model as the norm for press practice; this movement is only part of the symphony, and the symphony is a means to provide descriptive clarity and critical understanding -- but not advocacy. Still, it remains that his notion of communitarian journalism, at least as it emphasizes Marxist journalism, adds little to what was described in the Soviet Communist theory 40 years earlier.

Lambeth's perspective, which is set in the context of the ethical practice of journalism, does not part as sharply with past outlooks as Christians and colleagues' theory. But for that very reason, it poses a practical challenge to contemporary media activity that might be more readily taken up by journalists.

Bellah and his colleagues' work, though broadly communitarian, helps, along with Lambeth's, to provide a philosophical and practical justification for a community-oriented journalistic approach within the liberal tradition because it seeks to work within that tradition to carry out its goals. Although the wholesale philosophical shift proposed in Good News may be preferable for society in the long run, a justification that remains tethered to liberalism seems more likely, as a working model, to gain the support of individualistically oriented journalists.

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[86] Ibid.

Still, Christians et al's theory provides the most tantalizing vision because it departs most sharply from previous press theory and resonates with the concerns of communitarians to rethink both the philosophical foundations (Sandel) and the practical connections (Bellah) of society. Perhaps the greatest challenge for Christians et al. would be to put into practice their transformative press theory in daily American journalism. From the muckraking of the early 20th century to the investigative reporting and civic journalism of today, journalists have pursued avenues that have had the effect of fostering "civic transformation" -- or at least planting the seeds for it. This goal, then, is not entirely alien to the tradition of the American press. Where the authors will butt heads with working journalists, and libertarian-minded academics such as John Merrill, is in calling civic transformation a norm and therefore making it a duty.

Consideration of community-oriented press philosophy, including the wholesale paradigm shift of Good News, is important at more than an abstract level because of current trends in the media. As already noted, practitioners of civic journalism are attempting to connect members of the public and foster discussion of public problems in ways that parallel the concerns of communitarian strands of press theory.[87] At the same time, newspaper companies mindful of sagging readership and circulation are scrambling to engage reader interest through changes in content and design[88] -- changes motivated more by economic interest than by philosophical concern. In addition, the growing availability of interactive communication is raising new questions about journalism's and the public's role in creating community. Perhaps it is asking too much to think that academic press theory will actually shape journalists' view of their role, but these trends, in addition to the intellectual issues this paper has addressed, make pursuing this goal significant.

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[87] Civic journalism projects are being studied and summarized by the Project on Public Life and the Press, based at New York University and headed by Jay Rosen.

[88] See, for example, David Noack, "Getting Readers Involved: Newspapers Take Steps to Retain Readership," Editor & Publisher, 23 April 1994, 22; and Janni Benson, "Three New Ventures," Quill, September 1992, 16; Doug Underwood, "The Very Model of the Reader-Driven Newsroom?" Columbia Journalism Review, November 1993, 42.

What "Indians" Mean in the Media:
Race, Language, and the Popular Imagination

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Abstract

This paper describes a set of ideas about American "Indians" and locates the origins of these ideas in Western language, epistemology and culture. Using the writings of Columbus, Thomas Jefferson, Horace Greeley as well as recent news stories, the paper illustrates how Native Americans were defined first as different and then as unworthy. The paper argues that this identity is so deeply embedded in American discourse today that it perpetuates "Indian" stereotypes and prevents a full understanding of contemporary native life.

What "Indians" Mean in the Media:
Race, Language, and the Popular Imagination

Introduction: When the New York Giants football team prepared to take on the San Francisco 49ers in 1993, a *New York Times* headline said: "Westward Ho! Giants Circle the Wagons." The *Times* also used "circle the wagons" in several other recent headlines, including the Afrikaner resistance to multi-racial democracy in South Africa and a dispute between Hollywood executives and Attorney General Janet Reno. Given such uses, it seems clear that "circle the wagons" is a widely understood phrase in contemporary American discourse. It means, roughly, to "sit tight" or "hunker down" in preparation for an attack. The phrase originates from the experience of western emigration, where wagon trains would form a circle to defend themselves from attacks by Indians. But the continuing and popular use of this phrase raises a number of questions about the racial uses of language and the media's indifference to such meanings. Indeed, Native Americans have cited this phrase and others—"smoke the peace pipe," "off the reservation," and "the cavalry is coming"—as evidence of the continuing misrepresentation of Native Americans in the media. The regularity of such usages, they complain, "illustrates how media manage to vilify or categorize an entire group of people without that group of people even being a part of the story" (Center for the Integration and Improvement of Journalism, 1994, p. 49).

This essay argues that such phrases are sign of a familiar but fundamental misrepresentation of Native Americans and their cultures. Native people are not merely misunderstood by the media; indeed, it is more accurate to say that they are understood all too well. That is, Native Americans are represented by the media in language and images so narrow and so dependent on deeply rooted social understandings and cultural myths that most members of the dominant society know exactly what is meant by "Indians" in American culture. "Indian stories," "Indian language" and "Indian looks" are so common and so popular that their public meanings are virtually predetermined: all Americans seem to "know" that Pocahontas was a beautiful Indian princess, that Squanto was kind to the Pilgrims, that Geronimo was a cunning warrior, and on and on—whether or not the facts support such beliefs.

These ideas are neither trivial nor harmless. In fact, they obscure a whole range of Indian identities and characterizations—the complex relations and myriad details that make up an accurate description of a people and their culture. By relying on a small number of standard ideas and stories about Native Americans, popular culture and mass media have consistently and repeatedly reduced Native Americans and their cultures to cardboard cutouts, easily understood and even more easily dismissed.

In this essay, I explore the origins of "Indian" ideas as they are played out in media discourse and popular culture. My primary goal is to describe the ways that race and racial differences have been constructed in language, knowledge and culture and to investigate how these differences have formed a powerful popular identity for Native Americans. By analyzing the relationships between language, race, and difference in popular understandings of Native Americans, I hope to reveal the ways native people have been "made to mean" in American life and to illuminate the links between these meanings and contemporary images of Native Americans.

Significantly, but not coincidentally, few media scholars have addressed these issues. African American identities have been explored by a number of historians (Fredrickson, 1971; Van Deburg, 1984; Saxton, 1990) and recent cultural critics have developed a growing body of theoretical work on race and identity, most of it relating to African Americans (Omi & Winant, 1986; Gates, 1986a & 1986b; Todorov, 1986). Native Americans have been overlooked these analyses, despite a rich body of historical work on Native American-European American relations. In this paper, I build upon recent theoretical work to develop a more illuminating explanation for the cultural origins of the "Indian" identity and its enduring popularity in American media.

I begin with a brief analysis of the racial ideology of language and Western epistemology. I then examine the social and cultural construction of racial identities and the ideological consequences of these racial formations. Finally, I take up the problem of "Indian" racial representations in news and popular culture, symbolic forms with their own peculiar qualities.

Race, Language and Power: It is important, first, to address the meanings suggested by the word "race" and the continuing confusions over racial categories. What exactly does "race" mean and how has this meaning been achieved? Is race an indicator of genetic or "blood" differences? Is race a cultural distinction? Or is race simply a matter of skin color? If so, how and why have skin color distinctions been made? As these questions suggest, the concept of "race" has changed over time. Banton (1987) has documented the shift from theological and biological explanations of race (race as lineage) to sociological explanations (race as status and class). Other scholars have attacked "race" as a convenient but artificial distinction born of imperialism, ingrained in unjust social systems and perpetuated today in language and public discourse. Gates (1986a), for example, citing the confused history of racial ideas, argues that "race" as a biological fact does not exist. Indeed, Gates argues that "race" is less about biology than skin color. Thus Gates contends that racial distinctions are nothing more than arbitrary and socially constructed differences which are—and always have been—spurious. Todorov (1986) makes a similar point, noting that skin color is not the only way to categorize human beings. "[W]e obtain completely divergent subdivisions of the human species according to whether we base our description of the 'races' on an analysis of their epiderms or their blood types, their genetic heritages or their bone structures" (pp. 370-71). Other critics (Hall, 1991; Dennis, 1994; Wright, 1994) have pointed out that even skin color designations are arbitrary. People from the Indian subcontinent, for example, are Caucasians and have been counted in the U.S. census as white, whatever the tone of their skin.

For Gates and other critics, skin color has been made to mean something much more powerful than mere differences in pigmentation. Gates writes that race "pretends to be an objective term of classification...when in fact it is a dangerous trope" (1986a, p. 5). Further, Gates points out that the history of this trope includes the many attempts to attribute racial differences to God, science, the natural order, as well as supposedly unbiased descriptions of cultural tendencies. In short, popular concepts of race and racial difference have not been (and cannot be) adequately supported by differences in biology or physical appearance. There are, of course, real and significant differences between groups of people, but these differences have less to do with "race" than with different cultural practices and traditions. Race, Gates concludes, is "a metaphor for something else and not an essence or a thing in itself, apart from its creation by an act of language" (1986b, p. 402) For Gates, racial differences are both described by and inscribed in language. Thus I argue, with Gates, that race exists in language and ideology more than in actual, physical fact.

This view of race raises important questions about the role of popular culture and mass media in the creation and maintenance of racial ideologies, questions that expose racial assumptions and inequalities. Stuart Hall (1991) has illustrated the power of such assumptions by noting that "black" is a term laden with social and political significance. For Hall, a Jamaican of African descent living in Britain, the term "black" invokes a "signifying chain" of meanings which involve particular words—in his own case, "coloured," "West-Indian," "Negro," "black," "immigrant"—as well as the "ideologies of identity, place, ethnicity, and social formation" (p. 106). Moreover, these words and the racial ideologies that sustain them are deeply embedded in the social fabric; they operate "in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, in discursive formations" (p. 102). In short, the words and popular understandings of race and racial identity are not neutral, but creations of a complex system of differences and social inequalities.

For Native Americans, a similar "signifying chain" of meanings also exists. "Redskin," "red man," "savage," "heathen," "infidel," "brave," and "squaw" are all words that have particular histories in European and American discourse and, as Hall suggests, they represent something more than simple labels; they are invested with ideological power and they function as markers of the differences between whites and Native Americans. For words describing skin color, this is clearly the case, since skin color has been used in the U.S. and other Western countries as a marker of social status: "white" is the highest color, the most powerful and the most desirable. Darker shades of "black" and "brown," on the other hand, have been viewed as the lowest, the least desirable and the least powerful. Various shades of "tan," "yellow," "red," "olive," and the like are ranked somewhere in the middle. In general, then, the lighter one's the skin color, the greater one's opportunities for social and economic advancement. Conversely, the darker one's skin, the more difficult it has been to gain status or wealth.

Seen in this light, "redskin," a term once widely used to designate Native Americans, signifies something more than mere description; it marks a position in the social hierarchy. Thus even the most neutral or naive use of the term "redskin," "red man," or similar words cannot help but mark its object as non-white, as different from the dominant society, as—ultimately— inferior. This is also true, though in a less obvious way, for words often identified with Native Americans—"savage," "brave" and "squaw," for example.

An historical news example illustrates the "signifying chain" of meanings surrounding the meaning of "Indian." When Sitting Bull was killed in 1890, the New York Times invoked skin color and savagery to signal the status of his race. Sitting Bull was "distinguished," the Times said ironically, for his "impracticality and apparent motivelessness." He should have been a "comfortable old savage" eating his government rations, the Times noted, "for it is inconceivable that the red man should reject anything edible on the score of its quality." Though "the old reprobate" was unwilling to be a Messiah to his people, "he was as well aware as any copper-colored inhabitant of the country of the political value of a Messiah...." (December 16, 1890, p. 4.) In the abstract, "red man" and "copper-colored" are not negative terms. But in the context of this editorial, these terms are racial markers linked to several obviously negative words: "impracticality," motivelessness," "savage," and "reprobate." The logic of this discourse is to connect the idea of race with skin color and social worth so that "copper-colored savages" such as Sitting Bull are identified as different from—and inferior to—whites.

In sum, Native Americans have a powerful racial identity rooted in language and in the control of that language. Indeed, the argument here is that language itself is not—and cannot—be neutral or objective. As Said (1986) has argued, someone or some group always exercises power over words, terms, descriptions and, most importantly, meanings. Thus the meanings preferred by some individuals or groups take precedence over the meanings preferred by other individuals or groups. This inequality leads to the use of language as an instrument of domination and difference, especially when the language and symbols interact with other political, social and economic forces within the dominant society.

Discovery, Epistemology and Inequality: European explorers in the Americas saw themselves as agents of civilization, bringing imperial power and Christianity (among other things) to an unorganized and heathen land. Not surprisingly, this relationship had a host of consequences, not the least of which involved the origin, character and status of Native Americans. Faced with an entire hemisphere of new lands and new people to understand and explain, European explorers were forced to revise their theories about the world. It was largely an epistemological problem. "Having discovered America, [Europe] now needed to make a place for the New World within its intellectual and verbal universe," Wayne Franklin has noted (1979, p. 7).

One thing never in doubt, however, was European superiority. Europeans represented civilization and they controlled both the language of discovery and the organization of knowledge about the New World. Thus Indians became, in Eric Wolf's (1982) useful phrase, "people without history." Such people, as Edward Said (1986) has noted, were created as products of western historicism. For non-European societies, Said writes, historicism has supported the idea that "the one human history uniting humanity either culminated in or was observed from the vantage point of Europe, or the west" (p. 223). For North and South America, Africa, and other parts of the world, history began only when the Europeans arrived. "What was neither observed by Europe nor documented by it was, therefore, 'lost' until, at some later date, it too could be incorporated by the new sciences of anthropology, political economics and linguistics" (p. 223). Said's point is that the very epistemological foundations of western knowledge are structured in ways which diminish the power and significance of the non-European world. This has had the effect of privileging the European world in its relations with all its others and has helped perpetuate the myth of European superiority.

Like African-Americans and other people of color, Native Americans were imagined and symbolically created by the discourse of discovery and conquest. In his study of early travel writing from the New World, Franklin (1979) argues that the

European use of language offered a powerful and comfortable way of explaining America:

> More than any other emblem of identity, language seemed capable of domesticating the strangeness of America. It could do so both by the spreading of Old World names over New World places, people, and objects, and by the less literal act of domestication which the telling of an American tale involved. Moreover, it could provide voyagers just departing for America with a set of articulated goals and designs by which the course of Western events actually might be organized beforehand. This ability to "plot" New World experiences in advance was, in fact, the single most important attribute of European language. Like the expectations about what a New World report ought to contain (or omit), it entailed a faith in the almost magical power of words which was part of the larger European assumption about the immutable correctness of Old World culture (p. 5).

Building on Franklin, my argument is that America generally and Native Americans specifically were imagined and "created" from a language of discovery and imperial power that made a full and just account of Native Americans difficult if not impossible.

Some examples illustrate this point. Early Spanish explorers looked at the New World "through medieval spectacles" (Hanke, 1959, p. 3), an outlook that emphasized the fantastic. Europeans had imagined a world inhabited by "giants, pygmies, dragons, griffins, white-haired boys, bearded ladies, human beings adorned with tails, headless creatures with eyes in their stomachs or breasts, and other fabulous folks" (Hanke, p. 3). Prepared for such marvels, explorers saw Native Americans not as fellow humans beings but as strange and exotic creatures whose values and customs were bizarre or, even worse, heathen.

English patent letters characterized the New World and its inhabitants in similar terms. Gilbert's patent of 1578, for instance, described the land as "remote, barbarous, and heathen" (quoted in Seed, 1993, p. 113). Native people were frequently omitted from these letters altogether. When they were mentioned, they were often separated from the English in specifically religious terms; the English were Christians, of course, but the Indians were "infidels" and "pagans." (Seed, p. 115).

Columbus himself emphasized similar themes. The first mention of native people in his *Diario* was a reference to their nakedness (1530/1989, p. 63). The *Diario* also shows that Columbus, an explorer and voyager on a Royal mission, positioned Indians not just as different from Europeans but also as natural subjects of Spanish power and religion. Columbus gave the first natives he met red caps and glass beads "because I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force..."(p. 65). The natives are friendly, Columbus wrote, "and gave of what they had very willingly." Yet he could not write about the islanders without making comparisons between native and European ways. The natives "seemed to me...a people very poor in everything," he wrote (p. 65). As evidence, he cited their lack of iron weapons. "They do not carry arms nor are they acquainted with them, because I showed them swords and they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves" (p. 67). Columbus recognized the intelligence of the natives, but he mentioned intelligence a part of his evaluation of their potential as servants. (pp. 67-68) Finally, it is important that Columbus describes the natives in terms of their skin color. "[T]hey are the color of the Canarians," he writes, comparing them to the islanders of the Atlantic, "neither black nor white..." (p. 67). These initial impressions, collected on the first day of Columbus's encounter with the natives, illustrate how easily the acts and language of discovery identified Native Americans as separate and inferior peoples. Cultural comparisons were inevitable, of course, but the effect of the discourse—discussed in Europe for decades after 1492—was to amplify racial divisions and position Native Americans as barbaric, heathen, uneducated, and uncivilized.

Even Columbus's name for the natives had epistemological consequences. As Berkhofer has pointed out, by calling indigenous Americans "Indians," Columbus erroneously linked them to a known but exotic place and culture, reinforcing the differences between native and Europeans and emphasizing the "strangeness" of Native Americans. Wolf (1982) also argues that "Indian" as a racial designation is the outcome of European economic subjugation. "The term Indian stands for the conquered populations of the New World, in disregard of any cultural or physical differences among native Americans" (p. 380). With Berkhofer, Wolf notes that the European designation of Native Americans as "Indians" denied the natives them "any constituent group political, economic, or ideological identity of [their] own" (p. 380). In sum, the language used to categorize the natives of the New World had important social, economic and political consequences, one of which was to produce and sustain an ideology of exaggerated racial differences and Native American inferiority. Moreover, the single term "Indian" was used to collapse an enormous variety of indigenous American cultures and societies into a single, oversimplified category. Thus "Indians" came be seen by Europeans and Americans as a single group of people when in fact they were quite unlike each other in a variety of ways and never considered themselves to be a cultural or social unit. In short, the word "Indian" describes a category of people both defined and united by their differences from Europeans.

The presumed origin of Native Americans also worked against a full understanding of native life. In the decades after 1492, Berkhofer has noted, some European scholars attempted to explain Native Americans according to Christian cosmology, an explanation which held that all humans were related. But if so, why were Indians so different from Europeans?

> How came these previously unknown peoples to be in the Americas, given the story told in Genesis of Adam and Eve first peopling the Earth after their

> expulsion from the Garden of Eden and a repeopling of the planet from the children of Noah after the Flood? If Native Americans were unknown to Biblical and classical authorities, were they part of the human race at all? If so, from what branch had they sprung? (Berkhofer, p. 35)

Following this logic, Indians were thought to be the degenerate descendants of ancient Greeks, Scythians, Tartars, or Spaniards. A popular theory, Berkhofer notes, linked Indians to one of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel. Such theories fostered a self-serving view of Indians as degenerates of a once-great people, a view that influenced a host of later ideas—"doctrines of environmentalism, progress, evolutionism, and racism" (p. 38)—as ways to categorize, stigmatize, and disfranchise Native Americans. All this suggests that the European concept of race had less to do with biology than with real and imagined "racial" differences. With no concept of cultural pluralism, Europeans and early Americans could plainly see that native ways were different from—and inferior to—white ways. But what accounted for the native inferiority? The most powerful and all-consuming answer was deceptively simple: "race." Native cultures were inferior to European cultures because native people were naturally inferior to whites.

One consequence of such ideas was the division of humankind into moral categories: some "races" and colors (such as "white" Europeans) were morally superior to other "races" and colors (such as "black" Africans and "red" Americans). Berkhofer has pointed out that Europeans linked the moral qualities of a group to their physical characteristics and divided people into higher and lower categories according to these physical differences (p. 55). This was probably an inevitable human response, but it served to widen and exaggerate presumed racial differences and it helped to justify the European domination of "inferior" peoples.

Indeed, it is my argument that this meaning-making process remains central to contemporary conceptions of Native Americans and their cultures. Further, I maintain that this process helps account for the continuing popularity of the "Indian" over the past five hundred years.

Civil Society and the Indian: The creation of the Indian identity did not end with the language of imperial exploration. American ideas about democratic society also helped define the Native Americans in particular ways. As with earlier discourse, Native Americans were identified in American society as people beyond the norms of American social and civic life. And again, this separation had important consequences. Alexander (1992) has argued persuasively that American civil society has important moral dimensions. That is, American society includes a host of fundamental assumptions about how the society is to be organized; in Alexander's words, "a realm of structured, socially established consciousness, a network of understandings..." (p. 290). These understandings, in turn, make up "distinctive symbolic codes that are critically important in constituting the very sense of society for those who are within and without it (p. 290). Further, these symbolic codes constitute categories of civil membership; that is, they allow the society to distinguish good citizens from bad. Alexander writes, in fact, that "there is no civil discourse that does not conceptualize the world into those who deserve inclusion and those who do not" (p. 291).

Alexander's frameworkillustrates how Native Americans and other minority groups came to be defined as politically and socially "outside" and inferior. American democratic discourse is based on European ideas and "white" Americans naturally located themselves inside this discourse. It was, after all, a vocabulary and an ideology that reflected their values of political behavior and civic virtue: "republicanism and Protestantism, Enlightenment and liberal thought, of the revolutionary and common law traditions" (Alexander, p. 291). The assumptions and expectations implied by these terms constitute a boundary between democratic and "counterdemocratic" qualities. Accordingly, democracy requires rationality, self-control, conscience, deliberation, a sense of equality, and so on. Counterdemocratic qualities include irrationality, passion, greed, conspiracy, hierarchy, and the like. People who are described by the latter terms, Alexander notes, are seen by "real" or mainstream Americans as "being unworthy and amoral, as in some sense 'uncivilized'" (p. 291).

Although Alexander does not address Native Americans specifically, it is remarkable how well his analysis fits the native position in American culture. The counterdemocratic qualities on his list—dependent, irrational, mad, secret, deceitful, conspiratorial, factional, and the like—are often associated with most blatant racial stereotypes of Native Americans. No less than Thomas Jefferson understood the differences between "the Savage Americans" and European Americans in just such terms. Jefferson's examination of native life in Virginia led him to conclude that Indians were organized into "little societies" because "of their having never submitted themselves to any laws, any coercive power, any shadow of government" (p. 220). Jefferson, heir to Enlightenment ideas about democracy and individual rights, overlooked or ignored native ways of governing, and his writing reinforced the differences between Virginia tribes and English settlers. The point is not to fault Jefferson but to illustrate the standards of civic virtue by which Jefferson and other Americans judged the native world. As this example suggests, such evaluations were often exaggerated or wrong. Nevertheless, these evaluations identified a host of cultural and political differences as racial differences, making them even more intractable than they might otherwise have been.

Editor Horace Greeley also characterized Native Americans in terms of their potential as citizens. In 1859, the popular founder of the *New York Tribune* decided to take his own advice and "go west." By the time he got to Denver, Greeley had encountered a number of native people and he quickly seized upon their faults. On the plains, Greeley had seen Indian men "sitting around the doors of their lodges at the height of the planting season" (p. 152). This violated Greeley's ideas about work as well as God's plan for America: "These people must die out—there is no help for them. God has given this earth those who will subdue and cultivate it..." (p. 152). Indian men, Greeley decided, were "[s]qualid and conceited, proud and worthless, lazy and lousy" while Indian women were "[d]egraded and filthy" but, unlike the men, "neither too proud nor too indolent to labor" (p. 153). Although individual Indians could be shrewd, Greeley thought, most Indians were as simple as children. "Their arts, wars, treaties, alliances, habitations, crafts, properties, commerce, comforts, all belong to the very lowest and rudest ages of human existence" (p. 151). Notably, Greeley put his evaluation in civic terms: "Any band of schoolboys, from ten to fifteen years of age, are quite as capable of ruling their appetites, devising and upholding a public policy, constituting and conducting a state or community, as an average Indian tribe" (p. 151). To Greeley and most of his readers, Indians were clearly indolent and primitive, characteristics that put them outside the boundaries of the society and made them unsuitable candidates for citizenship. Moreover, Greeley's reports made the differences between the races was seem vast and immutable.

The common understandings of civic virtue and hard work were also used to undermine native land claims in the nineteenth century. John Quincy Adams, for example, attacked Indian claims in 1800 on the grounds that Indians were only hunters who "accidentally ranged" over it. "Shall the exuberant bosom of the common mother, amply adequate to the nourishment of millions, be claimed exclusively by a few hundreds of her offspring?" Adams asked (quoted in Gossett, 1963, p. 230). Valid claims required that Indians settle on the land and till the soil, Adams wrote—though he conveniently ignored the fact that many Eastern tribes lived in permanent villages and grew crops.

Impeaching native virtue became even more acute when the financial stakes were higher. In 1880, Colorado Congressman James B. Belford used laziness and sloth to deny mineral rights to native people. Belford concluded that

> an idle and thriftless race of savages cannot be permitted to guard the treasure vaults of the nation which hold our gold and silver, but that they shall always be open, to the end that the prospector and miner may enter in and by enriching himself enrich the nation and bless the world by the results of his toil (quoted in Gossett, 1963, p. 236).

Hard work and thriftiness were "white" characteristics, unattainable by degraded "savages." In other words, the nation's riches belong to its "proper" citizens, individuals who participate in the capitalist adventure and "enrich the nation." Inferior races need not apply.

In sum, Native Americans were defined as clearly outside the common understandings of the civic order—it was a western European system and Indians were obviously alien to it. The logic of this civic identification, however, was to define a host of skin colors and ethnic groups as unfit members of the democracy. Thus Native Americans, African slaves and black freedmen, Asian workers and Southern Europeans and others were marginalized both in discourse and in fact. In the case of Indians—people with "red" skins and "uncivilized" ways—there was little doubt about their moral and civic deficiencies, a fact that has been embedded in decades of American journalism and popular culture.

Media, Meanings and Indians: As Hall's "signifying chain" of meanings suggests and the discourse of discovery illustrates, humans use stereotypes and generalizations to understand other people and other groups. Indeed, it is probably impossible to think about and understand any group or category of people without some reliance on such generalizations. Nevertheless, the use of stereotypes and generalizations can be seen as racist, where racism is defined as "those social practices which (explicitly or implicitly) attribute merits or allocate values to members of racially categorized groups solely because of their 'race'" (Omi & Winant, p. 145).

Some examples show how this process works today in popular discourse: young African-American males can jump high, Asian students are academically gifted, and Native Americans have a "sixth sense" in the wilderness. Whatever the truth of such generalizations, it is clearly not the case that all young African American males are good jumpers, that all Oriental students are gifted or that all Indians have extraordinary powers of sight, sound and smell. Nevertheless, these generalizations have power in the society because they are widely accepted as true, whatever their literal truth. The fact that such racial generalizations are well known is a major source of their power and it is my contention that American society relies on a host of unstated racial assumptions that "everybody knows." These assumptions, in turn, perpetuate racism at all levels of society, including popular culture and the media.

Van Dijk's (1993) work on race and media sheds some light on how such racial generalizations interact with mass media. Historically, he notes, news and other public accounts of native peoples were closer to storytelling than to formal news. In both cases, commonplace stories about racial and ethnic affairs presuppose the storyteller's knowledge and beliefs about those affairs. Moreover, van Dijk writes, "storytellers implement, enact, legitimate, or challenge group knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies and thereby contribute to the reproduction of ethnic prejudices..." (p. 122). Van Dijk's insights offer further support for the idea that racial attitudes are embedded in both personal and societal narratives and that these narratives function in ways that maintain the dominant social order and keep racial minorities in an inferior position.

Native American product and team names are one ordinary manifestation of this practice. The list is extensive: Jeep Cherokee, Ford Thunderbird, Pontiac, Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves, Washington Redskins, Chicago Blackhawks, Tomahawk missiles, Apache helicopters, Crazy Horse Malt Liquor and so on. As this list illustrates, a only small number of qualities associated with Native Americans are emphasized: Cherokees are tough, Pontiacs are powerful, Chiefs and Braves are fearless, Apaches are great warriors and so on. Such racial logic sustains and reinforces the popular understandings of "Indians" and "Indian" characteristics, suggesting qualities that do not fit most Native Americans or that emphasize vague glories of the past. Nevertheless, these generalizations persist as evidence of racial differences, distinctions that follow a "they-all-look-alike" type of reasoning. Such thinking reduces the diverse range of native people and cultures to a small number of mostly negative and easily identifiable characteristics.

With respect to mascot names, it is significant that the debate centers on almost exclusively on Native American names. No sports team today carries a team name considered offensive to African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Jews, Catholics, or Protestants. But the Redskins, Braves, Chiefs, Blackhawks, and Indians continue to play football, baseball, hockey and other sports. This would seem to be direct evidence for the continuing power of the Indian stereotype in American culture. As suggested by the language and logic of discovery, Native Americans and their cultures are uniquely available for appropriation and use in ways that other people or cultures are not. Racial ideology is so embedded in popular thinking about Native Americans that team owners, players, fans, sports writers, and most of the public see the mascot debate as a trivial issue or another example of "political correctness" gone awry.

The deeply embedded meaning of "Indians" is also evident in news representations of contemporary Native Americans. Four recent stories, three from newspapers and one from a television news magazine, demonstrate that even balanced and "objective" contemporary reporting engages a set of common understandings and cultural assumptions about native people. While these examples are not statistically derived, I argue that they do illustrate the meaning-making process commonly used to make sense "Indians" in contemporary media. The first story, published in Oklahoma City in 1992, reported a federal judge's decision forbidding the Corrections Department from cutting the hair of native inmates who wear long hair for religious reasons. While the decision was a victory for the inmates, the story cast doubt on the nature and value of native religious beliefs. The second paragraph of the story, for instance, named the three inmates and said they "professed to practice a religious faith in which the cutting of their hair would be a sin" (Godfrey, *Daily Oklahoman*, January 8, 1992, p. 15A). The story noted that the state had allowed long hair for "sincere" religious beliefs, but revoked these exemptions a few months earlier as a threat to prison order and security. While the story balanced the state's interest in order against the judge's reasoning in overruling the state, it omitted any explanation of the inmates' beliefs, raising serious questions about the legitimacy of their ideas. What was this religion and why did it require long hair? What was the origin of such beliefs? What tribes follow this practice? Were these inmates members of those tribes? None of these questions was asked or answered in the story, omissions that undermined native religious claims and suggested its frivolous nature. Furthermore, the story's characterization of the inmates' beliefs—that they "professed to practice" this religion—hinted that these beliefs might be insincere. Based on the information available in the story, the native belief in long hair was either silly, groundless or simply convenient, a religious belief dredged up to create disorder and challenge prison authority. As in the past, this representation of "Indians" revealed them as cultural and civic outsiders, people with odd, perhaps unexplainable (and decidedly non-Christian) religious beliefs who use them to make trouble in the larger society.

Another recent news story employed a series of clichés about native people. Dirk Johnson, a writer for the *New York Times* News Service, used the success of a Minnesota tribe to explain the effects of casino gambling on tribal life across the nation. The story opened with the contrast between the stark but glorious native past and the controversial but lucrative future. "On this rolling expanse of tall-grass prairie," Johnson began, "...tribal elders would remind children growing up in rickety trailers that life had not always been so stingy." But change was on the way. Writing from Prior Lake, Minnesota, Johnson continued:

> The elders [of the Shakopee Mdewekantan] spoke of a time when great herds of roaming buffalo thundered on the plains with a promise of abundance for American Indians.
>
> Today the thunder has returned. It is the unceasing sound of coins being poured into slot machines at the tribe's Mystic Lake casino here. (*Tulsa World*, August 17, 1994, p. 7E)

This is effective writing, using contrast and colorful details to create reader interest. But it is also a romantic invocation of the Mdewekantan past, a way of efficiently glossing over the complex history of a tribe few readers have ever heard of. This efficiency, in fact, is what makes this theme such effective journalism—it's exactly the story we expect from Indians on the plains: Once life was glorious, then the white man came. Not coincidentally, Johnson's romanticism can be found in dozens of historic "Indian" movies, from *Little Big Man* to *Dances With Wolves*. Missing from Johnson's romantic thesis, however, was a detailed and informed explanation of the natives on their own terms, before and after white men came.

The story also assumed a capitalist future for tribal success. Johnson mentioned the "burst of entrepreneurship" taking hold on many reservations. He noted the gaming windfall that has financed new roads, houses and schools in

Indian Country. He reported that the Southern Ute tribe had purchased a gas-drilling company, a way of seeking more economic self-determination for the tribe. This reporting was nominally fair and "objective." But story's assumptions were entirely utilitarian and capitalistic; the tribes were presented here as moving naturally and inevitably toward the accumulation of wealth, economic independence, and development of infrastructure. This model apparently applies to the tribes named in the story, but other ways of native growth and development were not suggested here. In other words, the natives who follow the dominant culture could be explained and commended in the media. Tribes less capitalistic—tribes with traditional ways of development and different models of success—got no endorsement here.

Another recent story, aired on ABC's *20/20* on August 13, 1993, concerned the efforts of the Golden Hill Paugussett tribe to obtain land for a casino in Connecticut, an action that threatened the property rights of thousands of homeowners. The story was dramatic and emotional, a "natural" topic for a prime-time news magazine. Reporter John Stossel began by recounting the financial hardships of several residents as a result of the tribal claim. Homeowner Dan Nyzio of Trumbull, Connecticut, complained, "How would you feel if somebody shoved this [summons] in your hand and your property is threatened.... They want my property that I worked hard for all my life."

The story described the historical background of the dispute and laid out the issues on both sides. Despite the superficial balance of the story, the Paugussetts were positioned as threats to the social and economic order. As homeowner Nyzio noted, he worked hard for his home and property, a statement that implies that the Indians did not. This is explicit later in the story, when Stossel notes that the Paugussett chief has arranged a $500,000 HUD grant for housing assistance. The story then turns to homeowner Bob Daloia: "That's another gift. Their philosophy is to jump on the bandwagon." Nyzio again: "I worked hard for everything I have, just like 99 percent of the people in this country. The other one percent are a bunch of freeloaders, like these guys. They're looking for free stuff." Like Horace Greeley, these Connecticut homeowners champion hard work, a virtue apparently missing in these people, "the other one percent." The logic of such reasoning is fundamentally racist: these people—Indians—aren't like us; they're lazy and they want government handouts. "This is greed," a Trumbull selectman said at another point in the report.

Other "Indian" meanings surface as well. In fact, the whole concept of Indian identity is questioned in this story. One of the Paugussett leaders, Stossel notes, was "known for years to people around Trumbull as Ricky Piper." But Ricky changed and "now calls himself Chief Quiet Hawk...." So is he a real Indian? The people of Trumbull don't think so, as this excerpt reveals:

Homeowner Carol Moreau: "This is still a so-called chief, this is not, as far as we're concerned, an Indian, a genuine Indian."

Stossel: "You don't think he's a genuine Native American?"

Moreau: "Well, he may have some Indian blood."

The story then moves to Stossel's interview with Piper/Quiet Hawk. Stossel: "And you're an Indian."

Piper/Quiet Hawk: "I am an Indian."

Stossel: "And how much of you is Indian?"

Piper/Quiet Hawk: "Well, my father's a full-blooded Indian and my mother was black." Stossel then acknowledges that makes him legal Indian. But this claim is again challenged by residents of Trumbull, and then by Stossel, acting out his role as the skeptical reporter.

Nyzio: "There was no Big Eagle, no Small Eagle, no Moonface, no nothing just Ricky and Kenny, just like anybody else."

Moreau: "They're a family. That's all we know them as."

Stossel: "They say you're not really a serious Indian. You're Ricky Piper. They've known you all your life. It's only when you could make money that you became Chief Quiet Hawk."

Piper/Quiet Hawk: "Well, unfortunately, they—they would be wrong."

These exchanges illustrate the continuing effort of the dominant culture to define Indians without regard to native ideas or definitions. Despite the chief's undisputed legal status and the blood quantum that Stossel acknowledges, the residents refuse to accept his identity, a position the story tacitly supports. The Trumbull homeowners didn't know the Piper family to be an Indian family, so they must not be Indian, no matter what their heredity, legal status or current claim. By raising questions about native identity, the story reasserts the right of the dominant culture—in this case, the hard-working homeowners of Trumbull—to define who and what counts as "Indian." And the story clearly suggests that these "new" Indians are using their identity for private financial gain.

This disputed identity leads to such curious phrases as "genuine Indian" and "serious Indian," as if genuineness and seriousness were "racial" qualities. Moreover, neither Stossel nor anyone else in the story explains what degree of "Indianness" it would take for the Piper family to be considered "genuine" Indians. Is their "race" a matter of what they tell their neighbors? Is it what they tell themselves privately? Or is it a matter of skin color? If skin color counts, that ought to help Ricky Piper/Quiet Hawk, a man who appears to have relatively dark skin—though no one in the "20/20" story offers this as evidence of his identity. Such questions highlight the unstable definition of "race" as well as the way "racial" ideas are used in the media to delegitimize native identities and protect the status quo.

A 1994 Gannett News Service story about land claims in New York state reveals several similar uses of "Indian" meanings. The story, by reporter Carl Weiser, explains the conflict between white landowners in the Eastern U.S. and new claims made by Native Americans. While the story is balanced in its use of sources and opinions, it nonetheless frames the issue in ways which undermine the native view. Consider this dramatic lead:

> WASHINGTON — The 17,500 residents of Grand Island, N.Y., got one big eviction notice last August.
>
> The Seneca Nation of Indians filed a federal lawsuit seeking the return of its colonial-era tribal lands, including Grand Island, and demanding the ouster of residents. (August 21, 1994)

This makes interesting copy. But is it an accurate summary of the conflict? The story itself provides some clues. The third paragraph, for example, refers to the Grand Island real estate market being "temporarily paralyzed," language that suggests that the "eviction notice" of the first paragraph was exaggerated. More importantly, the story puts the probable outcome of the case in paragraph 48 (out of 51). Paraphrasing a New York state legislator speaking about a similar claim from the Onieda tribe, the reporter writes: "No one is going to lose their land...." Instead, a monetary settlement is likely, the legislator points out.

Like the "20/20" story, this story emphasizes conflict—evicting people from their homes. But because this conflict represented a threat to the white majority, the eviction theme was emphasized beyond the facts of the story itself. More importantly, this story, like the "20/20" story, questioned the legitimacy of the native legal claims. The second paragraph, quoted above, labeled the land claim as "colonial-era," a term which can be seen as attacking its validity, suggesting that the claim is so old as to be worthless. Further down, the story cites the "historic wrongs" committed against the tribes, printing this term in quotes. Such punctuation tags this phrase as something less than true and opens the way to disputing these "wrongs" altogether. As a result, this story communicates something more than an objective and balanced review of native land claims in the East. By emphasizing the threat to white landowners, questioning native legal claims, and underplaying actual grievances of native people, the story offers a good read but one that continues to treat Native Americans as deviant citizens, people who want to receive handouts at the expense of white Americans. One hundred thirty-five years after Greeley saw Indians sitting when he thought they should have been planting, reporter Weiser described the Senecas as more interested in suing over their colonial-era lands than in working "real" jobs. Then as now, a full understanding of native life proved illusive in the press.

Conclusion: The idea of the "Indian" in America is a complex cultural construct deeply rooted in language, Western epistemology and American civil discourse. It is my argument that these forces are so fundamental to "Indian" meanings in the media and popular culture that almost every public reference to Native Americans is understood in such terms. This was the case in 1990, for example, when Kevin Costner's *Dances With Wolves* became a box office success portraying the Sioux in romantic terms. Although this was an openly sympathetic image of the Sioux, it was a marginal position, an exotic and colorful culture from which Costner, the movie's central character, could learn new truths about himself and his culture. The Sioux were "good Indians," but they were also outsiders, fated to recede before the sweep of American progress. This marginal position has long been popular in Hollywood, as Berkhofer has noted: "No matter how important the Indian might be to the Western plot and genre, he usually served in the end as the backdrop rather than the center of attention..." (p. 98).

A more flagrant native representation surfaced in 1994 when country singer Tim McGraw released a recording called "Indian Outlaw." The lyrics included these lines: "I'm an Indian outlaw/half Cherokee and Choctaw/my baby she's a Chippewa/she's one of a kind" and "You can find me in my wigwam/I'll be beating on my tom-tom/pull out the pipe and smoke you some/hey, pass it around." Such notions might be dismissed as silly and insignificant. But easy familiarity and continued popularity of the cartoon "Indian" demonstrates the incredible durability and cultural power of this symbol.

Native Americans suffer from a narrow definition, one that is deeply racist and inherently harmful. Current debates about mascots, product names, newspaper and movie images, and the like are so enmeshed in a web of cultural assumptions and common understandings that neither media producers or consumers are able to think beyond the usual explanatory categories. No matter how different individual Native Americans may be, no matter what their similarities and differences from each other or from European Americans, Native Americans cannot overcome the identity they have been assigned. What is necessary, then, are new ways of thinking about "race" and difference. New symbols, new terms and new understandings might, over time, help enlarge the image of Native Americans and allow them to transcend their position in American culture. Given the centuries of misrepresentation and the embedded nature of racial ideology, this will be no easy task.

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"IT'S GOING TO BE A ROUGH RIDE, BUDDY!" A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COLLISION BETWEEN "HATE SPEECH" AND FREE EXPRESSION IN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE KHALLID MUHAMMAD CONTROVERSY

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ABSTRACT

"IT'S GOING TO BE A ROUGH RIDE, BUDDY!": A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COLLISION BETWEEN "HATE SPEECH" AND FREE EXPRESSION IN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE KHALLID MUHAMMAD CONTROVERSY

A phenomenological analysis of Kean College students' experiences of Khallid Abdul Muhammad's speech, "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews," reveals contradictory signification processes for students in terms of race, but similar signification processes for co-researchers by sex. While white and Hispanic students overwhelmingly interpret Muhammad's message as evidence of his racist attitudes, African American students interpret his speech in terms of their marginalized status in a white society; white and Hispanic students fail to make this connection.

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Introduction

> *To the whites in the audience, let me say to you before we even get started—it's going to be a rough ride, buddy! I didn't come to Kean College to tiptoe through the tulips. I didn't come to Kean College to pussyfoot. I didn't come to Kean College to dilly-dally or beat around the bush. I didn't come to Kean College to pin the tail on the donkey, I came to pin the tail on the honky.* (Muhammad, 1993, November 29).

With this introduction to the small crowd attending Khallid Abdul Muhammad's lecture on the Kean College of New Jersey campus, one of the loudest recent controversies surrounding the Nation of Islam, began. Muhammad, the "national spokesman" for Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, went on to deride and attack whites and blacks, Christians and Jews, and a wide variety of other targets. For example, here's Muhammad on the Bible: "King James version—here's a sissy, and you name a version of the Bible after a screaming sissy.... God does not name holy books after homosexuals" (Muhammad, 1993, p. 15); on Pope John Paul II: "You know that cracker...somebody need to raise that dress up and see what's really under there" (p. 18); on Jesus Christ: "that blond-haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned, buttermilk-complexion, peckerwood, cracker Christ" (p. 16); on celebrities and politicians: "Don't you give me no Cleopatra queen and get Elizabeth Taylor, some whore from Hollywood screwing everything that ain't screwed down" (p. 26); "It was the so-called Jews that financed Spike Lee....bubble-eyed, pigeon-toed, Jimmy-the-cricket, grasshopper-looking Spook Lee" (pp. 49-50); "When stinkin' David Dinkins ran for mayor...he wore a yarmulke on his head, bootlickin' for the so-called Jew" (pp. 32-33).

Most of Muhammad's attacks were directed at whites, and Jews in particular: "They're the bloodsuckers of the black nation and the black community.... The bagel-eating, lox-eating, impostor-perpetrating a fraud, Johnny-come-lately, just crawled out of the caves and hills of Europe, wannabe Jew" (Muhammad, 1993, pp. 41, 51). Muhammad also called Nelson Mandela a "fool" (p. 59) and endorsed murdering the whites in South Africa: "We'll give them 24 hours to get out of town by sundown. That's right. If he ain't out of town by sundown, we kill everything white that ain't right that's in sight in South Africa. We kill the women, we kill the children, we kill the babies. We kill the blind, we kill the cripple, we kill—we kill them all. We kill the faggot, we kill the lesbian, we kill them all" (p. 59).

The students and faculty at Kean College, where Muhammad made these extraordinary remarks, are demographically diverse: in 1994, 16 percent of undergraduate students were African American, 17 percent were Hispanic, and 5.4 percent represented other minority populations, including Native American and Asian; among the faculty, 10 percent were African American, 7.2 percent were Hispanic, and 4.5 percent were Asian or Native American. Only a handful of Kean students and faculty, however, actually attended Muhammad's 1993 speech, which remained an internal controversy among Kean administration and faculty until a few weeks later, when the Anti-

Defamation League of B'nai B'rith placed a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* ("Minister," 1994, January 16) and in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Minister," 1994, February 9) (see appendix A). The advertisement included 13 incendiary excerpts from Muhammad's speech, some of which are listed above. With this public denouncement, Muhammad, the Nation of Islam and Kean College became the focus of a very public media circus.

In the aftermath,. Kean President Elsa Gomez, the first Hispanic woman president at a U. S. college, resigned. Although a student organization had invited Muhammad to speak and paid his fee of $2,650, it was the college administration that came under fire ("Report renews," 1995, February 17). Kean faculty were polarized. Speakers were invited to campus to counter Muhammad's message, including a Jewish rabbi and actor Danny Glover. New Jersey Governor Christie Whitman persuaded Steven Spielberg to donate a copy of his just-released film, "Schindler's List," to show free of charge to students at other New Jersey colleges where Muhammad had been invited to speak to counter the anti-Semitic message. The Rev. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, waived his usual $20,000 fee to come to speak at Kean College. A consulting firm hired by the Kean administration to conduct workshops to improve the climate on campus suggested that the college's board of trustees held Jewish faculty and their responses to the speech responsible for making it difficult to recruit minority students to Kean ("Report renews").

Although few Kean College students had actually attended the speech (the total audience was slightly over 100, most from off-campus), the furor in its highly publicized aftermath affected the entire campus; students were confused, outraged, inspired, or ambivalent, some praising Muhammad, others condemning him. Such conflicting responses to Khallid Muhammad's speech raised some interesting questions. For example, students and faculty seemed divided as to whether Muhammad and his type of speech deserved First Amendment protection. As a faculty member at Kean College during this time, I wanted to understand more fully the students' varying experiences of the speech. Operating from these preliminary observations, the research problem is: Will students' experiences of Khallid Abdul Muhammad's speech, "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews," and his right to free speech cluster along racial and/or gender lines?

Methodology

Researchers have used a variety of methods in their attempts to understand the relationship between a text and the receivers' interpretation processes. Crow (1981) argues, however, that phenomenological analysis offers a more valid method for explicating the intersubjective aspects of a person's signification processes than more traditional approaches. In contrast to traditional methods that infer effects of a particular text by observing individuals' behaviors, often in controlled laboratory experiments that may manipulate audience experiences, a phenomenological approach to understanding the signification processes permits individuals to express for themselves the text's impact.

Although Crow is referring specifically to the signification processes viewers experience with films, his arguments are valid for any kind of analysis that seeks to explicate how people assign meanings to the messages they receive. For example, Nelson (1987) also argues that a phenomenological perspective is advantageous to researching media or any other textual experience of people because the focus of the data analysis is the "lived meanings as they are experienced by persons ... rather than objectively described behavior and abstractions" (p. 315). In other words, the focus of the research shifts from the researcher's interpretation of a text's meaning for receivers to an emphasis on understanding the receivers' experiences and interpretations of a text: "Phenomenology can lead us back to concrete experience in which meanings and values are experienced as lived-through phenomenon rather than as objects for scrutiny" (Nelson, 1987, p. 313).

Phenomenology rejects the referential, ideational and behavioral views of meaning acquisition that separate experiences from language. Phenomenological methods are grounded in the assumption that meaning is constituted during language interactions and, therefore, the research seeks to explicate how these representational views are themselves constituted (Deetz, 1973). Thus, phenomenology is concerned with understanding the direct language experience, which Heidegger refers to as understanding the constitutive experience of language (cited in Deetz). In this sense, the most basic role of language is to understand the various "purpose serving possibilities" of an object (Deetz, p. 45): "To name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action possibilities. Naming is not letting a word stand for some thing but achieving a stance as to how something is understood" (Deetz, p. 46). When we name an object, we understand that object within a certain perspective that includes specific "action possibilities" (Deetz, p. 46) Importantly, we do not respond directly to an object, but to our experience with that object. Thus, one goal of phenomenological research is to examine the "pre-experience, pre-predictive experience" that precedes each consciousness experience of people (Deetz, p. 42).

An underlying assumption of phenomenology is that all knowledge is conscious knowledge; how we understand an object or event is through our direct experience with it. Consciousness in this sense refers to the "direction, intention, or mode of doing in a world" (Deetz, 1973, p. 42); consciousness is thus an action taken in response to a situation. Conscious knowledge, therefore, is an interpretative process that occurs through our "phenomenological reflection on an already lived experience" (Crow, 1981, p. 6). Further, all conscious knowledge is assumed to exist within language. In other words, our perceptions and thoughts are brought to present consciousness in words (Deetz, 1973):

> There is a "languagely" meaning of language which affects the mediation between my as yet unspeaking intention and words, and in such a way that my spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought. (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Deetz, p. 44).

Hence, consciousness is negotiated through language. In terms of textual experience, the relationship between source and receiver is reciprocal, in which the receiver is the "individual and creative user" of the source (Nelson, 1986, p. 13). Thus, another goal of phenomenological research is to understand the nature, the "*how* of intentionality" (Deetz, 1973; Nelson, 1987, p. 314).

As a philosophy, phenomenology is concerned with the life-world of people; as a methodology, phenomenology is used to describe, define, and interpret the meanings of this everyday life world (Nelson, 1986). Thus, as a philosophy of "conscious experience," phenomenological studies are grounded in attempts to explicate phenomenon of experience as it "occurs existentially and directly for us and be-fore us" (Nelson, 1986, p. 15). As a methodology, phenomenological research is a reflective procedure that attempts to "dis-cover and re-animate the taken-for-granted phenomena of existence" and thus requires the use of interpretive techniques that allow the articulation and understanding of emerging experiences (Nelson, p. 15).

Thus, a major advantage of phenomenological research, is that theoretical categories and themes are derived from the phenomenon as experienced by the participants, rather than applying *a priori* categories to the phenomenon, that in effect, ignore the "density of meaning" of the participants' world and, instead reflect the pre-suppositions of the researchers (Delia & Grossberg, 1977, p. 37). Further, *a priori* categories and themes encourage researchers to accept a simplified view of the phenomenon of experience (Nelson, 1986). A phenomenological method, therefore, is particularly appropriate to explicating how women and men of different racial backgrounds experience Khallid Muhammad's speech. One of the basic epistemological assumptions underlying phenomenological research is the rejection of the idea of a passive person responding to stimuli (Giorgi, cited in Crow, 1981). A phenomenological perspective, in contrast, assumes that an "identical environment in no way implies identical replication of the phenomenon" (Giorgi, cited in Crow, p. 7).

Further, while gender and racial representations within texts have been the subject of much research, few scholars have used phenomenological theory to investigate first-person accounts of reactions to texts. In two phenomenological projects, Nelson (1989) studied viewers' experiences of watching television, and Crow (1981) examined viewers' experiences of films; neither study, however, articulated gender or racial differences among the participants. One study, a phenomenological research by Cooper and Descutner (1993), explicated the gender differences in viewers' experiences of the movie "Out of Africa." And Shively (1992) found differences between Anglo and Native American male students' identification with Western films, although this study was not based on phenomenological methods. Thus, the goal of my study is to provide more data to increase understanding of people's experiences of controversial texts, especially in terms of gender and racial differences.

Method

After reading excerpts of Khallid Abdul Muhammad's speech, 105 college students (48 women, 57 men; 29 African American, 15 Hispanic, and 61 white)[1] enrolled in undergraduate courses at Kean College of New Jersey were asked to express their reactions to the excerpts from the speech carried in *The New York Times* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as part of in-class assignments[2] (see appendix B). Following Peterson's (1987) method of using open-ended, self-report essays from students, I selected written self-reports to generate capta for the "phenomenological description." As a self-report technique, the essays express the "conscious experience of a communicative event" and, as such, allow co-researchers (the term to be used for student respondents)[3] to "describe the context of their experience in terms of affective, cognitive, and intersubjective dimensions that may or may not be readily apparent in observable behavior" (Nelson, 1989, p. 389; 1987, pp. 314-315). Hence, my analysis of self-report essays functions as a "second-level reduction operation" (Crow, 1981, p. 8), attempting to understand the process of message signification through an explication of the essential structures of the process as it occurred in the co-researchers' reflection on the text experience.

I attempted to "bracket" my own presuppositions (i.e., phenomenological epoche) concerning both the speech and my co-researchers in two ways. First, in order to avoid imposing my presuppositions on the co-researchers' experiences of the speech, I asked them to respond to the speech excerpts before discussing the issues surrounding Khallid Muhammad's appearance on Kean College campus in our classes. Second, in the instructions for the essays, I asked my co-researchers to respond to general, open-ended statements. This type of questioning reflects the open-ended interview guide approach discussed by Patton (1980), an approach that is particularly useful for phenomenological investigations because it allows co-researchers to use their own terms to express their experiences of events (Nelson, 1989, p. 390). Third, I deleted the title of the advertisement in which the excerpts appeared and all references to the Anti-Defamation League to avoid biasing co-researchers' responses.[2]

My analysis of the essays is adapted from Crow's (1981) study of film signification, in which he articulates a propositional model of film signification that provides a procedure for analyzing the ways in which people construct their meanings of films intersubjectively through written essays and conversations about their "experiences of films" (Crow, p. 5). For his unit of phenomenological analysis, Crow developed the signification act, which he defines as "a discrete unit of discourse which is used to make sense out of a particular phenomenon" (p. 10). Further, a signification act represents a validity claim made by people about a specific phenomenon in an attempt to assign a meaning to that phenomenon. Crow's study thus deconstructs film experience in terms of signification acts, with the parts of each act "constituting phenomenological essences of particular signification experiences" (Nelson, 1986, p. 16).

For the purpose of this study, I adapted Crow's (1981) phenomenological procedure of film signification to an examination of the signification processes of written text messages as follows:

Description:

During the descriptive phase, all statements that were "significant to contributing to the understanding" (Crow, 1981, p. 12) of the speech were identified and clustered into similar groups according to the type of statements (e.g., interpretation of First Amendment freedoms) or type of content discussed in the statements (e.g., racist speech is not protected speech). Description procedures constitute a systemic comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation (Peterson, 1987).

Reduction:

The types of statements and the types of content of the statement clusters were reduced to one-sentence propositions that define the relationship between the two categories. The purpose of the propositional statements is to describe the meaning "given *with* the signification act but not stated as such *in* it" (Crow, 1981, p, 13). For example, one signification act Crow explicated concerns a particular character's lack of realism, a common type of content statement that resulted in the proposition, "The realism of the character is criticized" (p. 13). In my study, one signification act relates Muhammad's words to First Amendment rights, resulting in the proposition, "The Constitutional rights of an American citizen are interpreted."

Each signification act requires both a signifier that carries the meaning, and a signified, the meaning that is carried by the signifier. The propositional statements are thus explications of the underlying processes used by receivers to construct their meanings in their experiences of texts (Nelson, 1987, p. 314).

In order to allow the relevant propositions to emerge from the personal narratives of the co-researchers and not from my own preconceived ideas of important categories, I began this stage of the analysis without developing any *a priori* propositions or categories that I would attempt to "fit" to the narratives. In other words, I "bracketed" my presuppositions in order to "specify the structure ... the pre-reflective form of lived reality" for the co-researchers (Peterson, 1987, p. 41).

Interpretation:

The propositions were categorized according to what was being signified (e.g., rights, symbolism, motives) in order to unite the descriptions and definitions articulated and, in turn, to explicate how the co-researchers' processes of interpretation created their experiences of the text.

Here the goal is to "specify the meaning of conscious experience, i.e., the value relationship uniting description and reduction" (Nelson, 1986, p. 16).

My goal in analyzing these essays written by students attending Kean College when Muhammad spoke on campus is to understand any gender and racial differences and similarities in the meanings that emerge during their experiences of his speech, "The Hidden Relationship Between Blacks and Jews." By analyzing the co-researchers' essays, I was able to compare the public narrative of the speech with the private narratives of receivers, in order to further explicate the signification processes used by people to construct their meanings to controversial messages.

Analysis

Description

In order to identify the statements abstracted from the essays of the co-researchers as well as to distinguish between the responses of women and men and their respective races, essays are labeled with numbers according to each co-researchers' sex and race [4] (e.g., African American women's essays are labeled 1-14 and African American men's are labeled 15-29). The significant types of statements and contents discussed in the co-researchers' essays cluster into five types: interpretation of First Amendment rights, interpretation of the speech's message, interpretations of Muhammad's personality characteristics and motives, and expressions of perceived reverse discrimination and perceived racial tension on the Kean College campus. The first cluster type focuses on assigning meaning to the limits and the protections of free speech, the second and third clusters of statements are interpretations of Muhammad, his speech and its underlying motives, while the final two clusters of statements represent opinions concerning the co-researchers' perceptions of racial tensions and discrimination at Kean. In the classifications listed below, the headings represent the type of statement (e.g., interpretation of First Amendment rights), and examples provided under each heading represent the types of content in the statements [5] (e.g., racist speech is not protected speech).

1. Interpretation of First Amendment rights of free expression. Content statements in this cluster focus on interpreting the limits and protections of free speech, in light of the specific narratives within Muhammad's speech. The majority of the co-researchers interpret the First Amendment in terms of their perceptions of where it may or should be limited: in this case, if the words spoken endorse killing or violence, or if they encourage racism and hatred. The First Amendment limits are interpreted by the co-researchers' within the specific context of the speech. Some typical examples of specific descriptions of the limits on free speech if it promotes violence include: "While I do agree with freedom of speech for everyone, there is a point where this goes too far—advocating killing Jews and whites again and again" (5); "His words could only cause problems which may lead to violence" (95); "The man specified types of murder to be used for Christ's sake.... If the guy says someone else should be killed, this view should be prohibited"

(96); and, "I believe speakers cross the line when it comes down to talking about killing certain races of people" (97).

Co-researchers also describe limits to free expression if the words encourage hatred and racism. Again, their descriptions are primarily specific statements related to free speech as it applies to Muhammad's remarks. Some examples of specific statements of First Amendment limits if the words promote hatred or racism are: "I don't believe that a person should make a speech so full of hate against anybody" (35); "Hate is being disguised as free speech" (46); "Freedom of speech does not mean that one person can just come up to a public place and insult other races" (61); "Our laws allow for free speech, but at what costs? There is no harm in speaking your own mind, no matter how wrong. But there is no way we can reach racial harmony with hate mongers feeding the flames of fire" (66); "Anything as insulting and disgusting as racism should be prohibited" (100); "The bastard should never have been allowed on campus.... People should not be teaching hate on campus. We are not trying to breed new Hitlers" (98); "He [Muhammad] deserves no constitutional rights, for he is a racist, bigot and he promotes violence" (80); and, "He has violated my rights with his garbage" (103).

Although most co-researchers describe what they think are appropriate limits to free expression in their descriptions of First Amendment rights, a second type of statements in this cluster focuses on the rights to unlimited freedom of expression. Here the co-researchers' descriptions of unlimited free speech rights fit into three categories: constitutional guarantees, choice to listen, and a category that might be labeled as "an eye for an eye. " The first group of statements describe Muhammad's right to express his views in terms of his constitutional rights to free speech. For example: "He does have the right to express his feelings. Hey, that's America—you take the good with the bad" (43); "It's one man voicing his racist thoughts—his freedom of speech" (16); "I am Jewish. I feel that Muhammad has every right to say the things he did" (72); "As far as the requesting of killing certain people in regards to their race, of course it's insane and morally defunct, but I would defend his right to say it" (73); "I don't agree with anything he's said, or probably anything he will ever say.... However, I also feel that no matter what he stands for, he has a right to voice it" (81); "I feel his speech was disgusting. But I believe the man has the right to say whatever the hell he chooses even if it might be cynical and deadly" (91); "The guy was racist, but so am I.... If we stopped people from saying what we don't like to hear, everyone would have to be silent" (92); and, "He has the right to speak his mind and it we don't allow him to then we are turning back the hands of time to a time of dictators" (83);

The second category of statements describes unlimited free expression rights in terms of individual choice. Here the co-researchers focus not only on the right of people to express their opinions, but the right of individuals to chose not to listen to speech they find offensive. As with the previous examples, the co-researchers' statements relate specifically to Muhammad, as in the following: "If everyone is so upset about his speeches—don't go—you don't have to sit there and listen" (51); "Mr. Muhammad is entitled to his opinion. It is our choice if we would like to hear it" (99); "Everyone has to have the opportunity to express themselves, their ideas and people can decide what they want to hear" (54); "The audience is not forced to listen or follow his footsteps" (69); and, "The public can ignore him" (81).

The third category of statements under the cluster of unlimited free speech, coming solely by African American co-researchers, describe Muhammad's right to free expression in terms of "an eye for an eye." In these examples, the co-researchers rationalize that since white Americans have tolerated and condoned racism against the black population for centuries, they now have to be willing to allow African Americans to express similar kinds of attitudes toward the white population: "You got angry when he said to kill the babies. They have been killing us for thousands of years and now you want me to be sympathetic because he said something to enlighten what you should already know. Shame on you." (6); "The KKK did say what they felt and killed black people in the South and you're going to take what one man said and have problems with it, but the KKK has said and killed for many years. What's the difference?" (1); "I feel that if it was a white person saying that type of speech, there would not have been any controversy" (15); "The major reason [for the controversy] was because he was black, and talking about Jews and whites. If it was the other way around, I bet nobody would have cared" (21); and, "If Muhammad is not allowed to speak, they'll just be silencing blacks, as they always try to do.... What about the Klan and skinheads? I don't hear anyone trying to silence them. You people are so funny" (22).

2. *Interpretations of Khallid Muhammad's speech.* Here the focus of the co-researchers' comments results in two contradictory descriptions of Muhammad's speech—as either racist or as non-racist. The overwhelming majority of the white and Hispanic co-researchers describe the speech as racist, while black co-researchers are more likely to describe Muhammad's words as non-racist. Some example of co-researchers' statements that describe the speech as racist are illustrated the following examples: "The speech was nothing but a black man's version of a KKK meeting" (42); "He is spreading more hate" (45); "I think he wants black people and white people to kill each other.... he wants everybody to hate each other" (60); "He says Hitler's evil, but did good killing 6 million Jews" (89); and, "It's a very racist speech, that doesn't stand for how every black man in America feels or how every Muslim in America feels" (16).

African Americans who describe Muhammad's speech as non-racist focus on what they see as the "truth" in Muhammad's message: "I guess one who is narrow-minded would view Bro. Muhammad's speech as racist and anti-Semitic hate speech. But let us bear in mind that there are truths in the message he delivered" (6); "The things he spoke of were real and do exist today...[his comments] wouldn't be offensive if there was no truth behind what is being said" (11); "I believe he was actually enlightening African Americans of his interpretation of how Jews have been sympathized [with] for centuries and still are. And yet they are the power players, the controllers, the hand that undermined African Americans and helped to enslave us into the sinkhole we are in today" (17); "Well, I have to agree with Khallid Muhammad because he spoke the truth...the so-called Jews do run the country. I like when he said whites are evil.... It's true white people are evil. Look at what they have done" (19); and, "Read the Bible. Who were the original chosen people? And who were the settlers that stole the land and rewrote the book to suit their purposes? Christian groups teach lies" (22).

3. Expression of Khallid Muhammad's motives and personality characteristics. This cluster also resulted in conflicting statements among the co-researchers. African American co-researchers' predominately describe both Khallid Muhammad and his motives behind his words as neutral or positive, empowering for the black race. In contrast, the white and Hispanic students almost without exception write negative statements in their descriptions of Muhammad and his behavior. Some examples from the non-African American co-researchers are: "He is just crazy...speaks garbage" (84); "Muhammad put bad things in their heads [African American students], we don't need his kind of speech in this society" (86); "He blames the white man for his troubles. That is a lot of crap.... If you're not strong enough or smart enough to fend for yourself, then you should blame yourself....The whites aren't holding the 'black community' down, they hold themselves down" (90); "The man has no sense of morals" (93); and, "If he hates us 'crackers' so much then get out of our free country and convert to your own private black Islamic, Communist or Socialist party before you become another Malcolm X—dead!" (70).

In contrast, most of the African American co-researchers describe Muhammad in positive terms: "Muhammad's speech was very powerful" (3); "He had the guts to publicly denounce this country's treatment of blacks" (5); and, "I think it [speech] was pro-black. I believe he was actually enlightening African Americans.... Overall he suggest [sic] that it is the black race that should be sympathetized [sic] and given back what was rightly theirs" (17).

4. Expressions of perceived "reverse" discrimination. This was a cluster only for white and Hispanic co-researchers, all male with the exception of one white woman. Here, the co-researchers express the idea of reverse racism and discrimination against the white population in America. Consider the following examples: "If a white speaker said to kill all blacks, I think there would have been heavy violence on campus" (46); "If a white would have said that about blacks then that would have created more of a controversy because the blacks for some reason believe that they deserve special treatment and can have black Miss America, black TV shows, black magazines, etc., but if there was only a white Miss America or the advancement for white people, that could not happen" (69); "If it was the other way around and the whites had the KKK come and give a speech, there would have been hell to pay, and without a doubt, a riot" (78); "Sure it is fine for the people who support such idiots to say he deserved the right to speak. I very much doubt that these same people would think nothing of having David Duke of the KKK come to speak" (79); "The minority students [at Kean] get away with murder.... [Kean] caters to the black and Hispanic students and if you're white, you better just watch your back" (82); "The blacks are the ones who make most of the trouble in society. You don't see a white Jewish guy standing in front of the college saying 'Kill the blacks. They are no good' " (84); and, "The government gives them so much support it's sickening, yet they still cry for more. It kills me that the NAACP can force companies to hire someone for their color and not their ability to do a job" (90).

5. *Expressions of perceived racial tension on Kean College campus.* This was a minor cluster for all of the co-researchers. Here, some of the co-researchers of each race and sex write statements describing worsened racial tensions at Kean College in the aftermath the Muhammad speech: "Now some white people think just because your [sic] black you automatically think like Khallid Muhammad" (23); "I think people are afraid to discuss the issue" (11); "I think it made whites and Jews a bit anxious and fearful, while inspiring some blacks" (17); "I live on campus and every night I am afraid to walk through campus because of the blacks yelling 'kill whites.' It really sucks" (36); "I feel it is slime like him [Muhammad] that contribute to the tension...his hatred, bigotry and stupidity cause so many problems" (90); and, "I know I feel more tense" (33).

Reduction

In order to reduce redundancy and allow the clusters that best represent the ways that the co-researchers typically made sense of "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews" speech, I first eliminated the minor clusters and clusters that were not significant in contributing to the co-researchers' understanding of the speech excerpts. Then, I reduced the types of statements and the types of content statements in the remaining clusters to one-sentence propositions that define the relationship between the two categories. The propositional statements describe the "signification act being performed by a student or a series of statements" with the clusters (Crow, 1981, p. 13). This reduction resulted in three propositional statements each operating on two conflicting levels of meaning.

1. (A) The constitutional rights of an American citizen are interpreted after the speech, leading to a rejection of the First Amendment right to free speech; and (B) The constitutional rights of an American citizen are interpreted after the speech, leading to an appreciation for the First Amendment right to free speech.

The majority of white and Hispanic co-researchers, both women and men, reject the notion of unlimited free speech. Despite recognition of the constitutional guarantees of the First Amendment, these co-researchers express their concerns regarding speech that endorses violence, and/or promotes racist attitudes. These concerns articulated in their statements result in both an explicit and implicit endorsement of censorship: "I believe in free speech, but not when it's like this. He should have his mouth washed out with soap" (49); "He should not have the right, but does" (101); "Anything as disgusting and insulting as racism should be prohibited" (100); "Although this country allows freedom of speech, I think that no one has the right to speak hate against any person or nationality" (58); and, "When our founding fathers described 'freedom' in this country, they meant to say freedom to say or do anything that is morally correct and of little offense to anyone or any group" (94).

While the white and Hispanic co-researchers overwhelming support limits on free expression, the African American students are more likely to express support for unlimited free expression. Often the co-researchers who defend unlimited free speech, regardless of their ethnicity, write that despite objections to the attacks on whites and Jews in Muhammad's speech, they recognize that the right to free speech does not come without a cost: "If we stopped people from saying what we don't like to hear, everyone would have to be silent" (92); "If we try to quiet those individuals who don't see the world through our eyes, how can we justify being any different from him [Muhammad]" (33); "Everyone is entitled to say what they please" (1); "Well, to me some of his statements may have been harsh, but this is America and we do have freedom of speech" (21).

2. (A) The symbolism of the message in Khallid Muhammad's speech is interpreted literally, leading to a negative attitude; and (B) The symbolism of the message in Khallid Muhammad's speech is interpreted intersubjectively, leading to a positive attitude.

As with the previous propositional statements, the interpretations the co-researchers assign to Khallid Muhammad's speech break down along racial lines. While the majority of the African American co-researchers describe the speech as non-racist, nearly all of the white and Hispanic students interpret it as racist. For the co-researchers who say the message is racist, the primary reason stated for this belief is that Muhammad's words promote hatred toward whites and Jews, an attitude they find unacceptable: "Freedom of speech does not mean that one person can just come up to a public place and insult other races" (61). For these co-researchers, at issue is the explicit, literal interpretation of Muhammad's words. These co-researchers see little meaning beyond the words themselves, for example, how Muhammad's speech may have been empowering for blacks.

In contrast, the main argument given by African American co-researchers to support their position that Muhammad's message is not racist is the idea that speaking the truth, regardless of how unpleasant that truth may be, does not constitute a racist message: "Sometimes the truth hurts" (23). Here the co-researchers relate Muhammad's words to the history of black oppression in America, allowing them to articulate the belief that Muhammad's verbal attacks on white and Jewish populations are justified; they argue that whites and Jews persecuted blacks for centuries, which is essentially Muhammad's justification for his calls for black separatism. Significantly, black co-researchers don't defend Muhammad's right to utter racist epithets. Rather, for them the issue of the right to express opinion regardless of who is offended is secondary to the argument that Muhammad's words do not constitute racist remarks. Here, defending the First Amendment takes a back seat to defending Khallid Abdul Muhammad.

3. *(A) The motives of Khallid Abdul Muhammad are evaluated after the speech, leading to an impression of Muhammad as an opportunistic radical; and (B) The motives of Khallid Abdul Muhammad are evaluated intersubjectively, leading to an impression of Muhammad as a champion of African American rights.* Whites and Hispanics overwhelming describe Muhammad as an unprincipled troublemaker, a racist who is out of touch with the reality of today's world: "I feel sad for African Americans who went to this speech to hear a great speaker and instead heard trash from a man who is an embarrassment.... What a sick man" (41); "His method reminds me of school children whining and complaining because Bobby or Susie did this or that. Grow up...life is what you make it and right now you are painting life as a very dark, violent, and hopeless place for many of your 'African-Americans' who may fall into your trap of lies" (47); "He is nothing but a racist black pig, who should be shot and blown off the earth" (68); "Anyone who actually took this speech seriously has some problems. Khallid Abdul Muhammad is a crackpot" (72); "I think the Nation of Islam preys on young blacks, especially young black males who don't have a sense of guidance or direction" (73); and, "If you can't see what's wrong here, then you're just as fucked up in the head as he is" (75).

Only a few African American co-researchers, however, describe Muhammad's motives as negative. Instead, the statements from the blacks participating in this study represent a more positive impression of Muhammad, a sense that what he is saying may be necessary to empower and unite blacks: "I think the speech was more pro-black" (17); and, "I guess one who is narrow minded would view Bro. Muhammad's speech as racist and anti-Semitic hate speech.... He had the guts to publicly denounce this country's treatment of blacks" (6).

Interpretation

Crow (1981) states that the categories of each signification act (e.g., symbolism of Muhammad's message) constitute the phenomenological essences of a specific signification experience. Thus, during the final stage of the analysis, I categorized each propositional statement according to what was signified in the statement in order to allow the phenomenological essences (i.e., signified categories) to emerge from the propositional statements, resulting in three essences with two contradictory levels of meaning: First Amendment rights of free expression, the symbolism of Muhammad's message, and the perceived motives underlying Muhammad's words. Then, I explicated the differences between the experiences of the co-researchers in terms of their races.

The first essence, the rights (signified) of the First Amendment (signifier), results in contradictory signification processes for the co-researchers based on race. In this instance, most of the Hispanic and white co-researchers support limits on free expression, while African American students are more likely to support unlimited free speech. We can try to understand these differences through considering both the pre-conscious and conscious reflections of the co-researchers. At a pre-conscious level, American citizens are taught to accept the idea that speech is protected, that one of the fundamental principles of our democracy is the right to free expression. Upon conscious reflection, however, this ideal is questioned, and the acceptance of unlimited free speech—for example, if I don't agree with you or if you're attacking me—starts to crumble. Indeed, the primary reason cited by the white and Hispanic co-researchers for limiting free speech is that racist speech should not be protected, but for the most part, they fail to articulate what constitutes racist speech (as the Supreme Court once acknowledged, I can't define obscenity, but I know it when I see it). In this case, the co-researchers are simply defining racist words as the words spoken by Muhammad against whites, Jews and the Pope. It is entirely plausible that these co-researchers may have interpreted Muhammad's speech very differently if he had targeted different races, or groups or a different religious leader (e.g., the communities around Kean College have a high Catholic population). Indeed, this is a claim several black co-researchers make: "The major reason [for the controversy] is because he was black, and talking about Jews and whites. If it was the other way around, I bet nobody would have cared" (21); and, "I feel that if it was a white person saying that type of speech, there would not have been any controversy" (15). Interestingly, many white men make a similar argument regarding Muhammad's speech, but from the mirror-image perspective: "If a white would have said that about blacks, then that would have created more of a controversy..." (69); and, "If it was the other way around and the whites had the KKK come and give a speech, there would have been hell to pay, and without a doubt, a riot" (78). Thus, a strong factor in the co-researchers' reactions to Muhammad's speech seems to be a factor of "whose ox is getting gored," an attitude articulated during their conscious reflections on Muhammad's words.

The second essence, the symbolism (signified) of the speech message (signifier) also reflects conflicting signification processes in terms of race. These differences in the signification processes can perhaps be explained by the pre-conscious perceptions of the co-researchers. Khallid Muhammad's words are very polarizing—you're either with us or against us. Hence, the co-researchers may have felt compelled to take sides. One result of this polarization is that Hispanic co-researchers seem to identify more strongly with whites than with the African Americans, as illustrated in this statement from a Hispanic woman: "I'm not Jewish, but these remarks hit me hard" (62). Muhammad's statements about Pope John Paul II (e.g., "...the old, no-good Pope, you know that cracker. Somebody need to raise that dress up and see what's really under there," Muhammad, 1993, p.18) may have functioned to align the Hispanic co-researchers in this study, most of whom who were Catholic, with the white co-researchers.

For their part, blacks may have seen taking a position against Muhammad as having to take a position against their own race. This is not a new concern for African Americans. Many black women and men were reluctant to voice opposition to Clarence Thomas (Painton, 1991, October 28); leaders of the NAACP kept quiet about misused funds rather than risk public exposure (White, 1995, February 13); when Mike Tyson was charged with rape, his accuser was criticized for trying to bring down one of her own (Goodman, 1992, February 14); and O.J. Simpson's attorneys wanted as many blacks on the jury as possible because they felt it would be more difficult for African Americans than for whites to render a guilty verdict (Gibbs, 1994, June 27). Understandably, African Americans have tended to defend fiercely any black who rises to a position of power in society precisely because so few have risen to power. Thus, it would be more difficult for the black co-researchers to accept that Muhammad's words are racist, because such an interpretation could be seen as taking sides against their own people.

The co-researchers participating in this study all lived near Kean College, an urban area a few miles south of Newark, New Jersey. The area has all of the problems associated with urban life in America, but this is perhaps even more pronounced for the black students. For black students who truly live the daily lives of a marginalized, disadvantaged group, opposing a black man with the prestige accorded leaders of the Nation of Islam might have been more difficult than it would have been for black students living in less starkly segregated situations. Indeed, one of Muhammad's primary messages to his predominately black audience at Kean College was that the reason blacks are marginalized, the reason blacks live in poverty, is that blacks continue to be oppressed by whites, and in particular, by Jews: "Who are the slum lords in the black community? The so-called Jew.... They're the bloodsuckers of the black nation and the black community" (Muhammad, 1993, p. 41). This is a message that may resonate with urban blacks, may make them feel empowered, as two African Americans write in these statements: "I believe there are times when we must offend to make a point. I think Muhammad was not trying to invite violence or cause fear in any other race.... The speech was more pro-black...it inspired some blacks" (17); and, "Muhammad's tongue is like a sharp sword—it has pierced the hearts of many who stand behind it and honor it" (3).

In this case, the non-African American co-researchers may have interpreted the speech from a pre-conscious perspective that expects blacks and other racial and ethnic groups not to have the same power and respect in American society as whites, and, thus, they did not recognize or could not relate to Muhammad's emphasis on the oppression of African Americans and their continuing marginalized status in society. As Bate (1988, p. 86) reflects: "A fish would be the last creature to discover water, because it is surrounded by water throughout its life." Similarly, as long as a society is dominated by the white population, perhaps it will be difficult for whites to notice inequalities in the system for non-whites. This attitude is evidenced in the following statement from a white male co-researcher: "I don't know why anybody would want to go listen to him speak" (40).

As with the previous two essences, the third essence—the motives (signified) of Khallid Abdul Muhammad (signifier)—has two contradictory signification processes for the African American and non-African American co-researchers. We can once again examine the pre-conscious perspectives and conscious reflections of the co-researchers to understand these differing processes of signification. The pre-conscious perspectives of the non-African American co-researchers do not include a perceptual frame that allows then to identify easily with a black man, especially a loud, proud, unapologetic black man. Indeed, this is precisely the stereotype of black men many whites have been taught to fear. One is reminded of the reactions of the white population to Muhammad Ali in the early 1960s; whites were offended and even frightened by a black man who not only seemed proud of his blackness, but who did not seem to fear whites. The actions of Malcolm X, and even his more pacifist contemporary, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as other civil rights leaders, also intimidated many whites. Similarly, Khallid Muhammad and his presentational style may feed into some of the inner fears many whites may hold toward blacks, and thus may serve to divide rather than to unite.

Further, because the pre-conscious perspectives of the non-African American co-researchers may tend to include fear or suspicions of a powerful black man, this perspective necessarily negates any identification with Muhammad for non-African Americans. Consider the following examples: "I feel sad for African Americans who went to this speech to hear a great speaker and instead heard trash from a man who is an embarrassment" (41); "...you [Muhammad] are painting life as a very dark, violent, and hopeless place for many your 'African-Americans' who may fall into your trap of lies" (47); "For him to even consider himself a religious man is incomprehensable [sic]" (51); "He is really a sick person" (56); "Muhammad and the whole Nation of Islam is [sic] ignorant" (59); "What he is saying is so stupid and crazy" (60); "Muhammad is a nut" (67); "He is nothing but a racist black pig..." (68); "Khallid Abdul Muhammad is a crack-pot" (72); "I think the Nation of Islam preys on young blacks..." (73); "I could care less about what he says because he has no actual authority in the minds of most sane people" (75); and, "The guy has no bearing in my life whatsoever" (81).

In contrast, the pre-conscious perspectives and reflections of the African American co-researchers may include an opposite perception of powerful blacks. Rather than feeling fear, anger or frustration, the African Americans seem to have a perceptual frame that appreciates and welcomes black people with power, even if they don't necessarily agree with or endorse the views of this man: "Muhammad's speech was very powerful" (3); "He had the guts to publicly denounce this country's treatment of blacks" (5); and "I believe he was actually enlightening African Americans.... Overall he suggest [sic] that it is the black race that should be sympathetized [sic] and given back what was rightly theirs" (17). When we consider the overall message Muhammad conveys to blacks—that *they* are God's chosen people, not Jews, that Christ was black not white, that they are not responsible for their oppressed conditions: whites and Jews are—a black response to Muhammad of appreciation and pride is easier to understand. Indeed, this message to African Americans is not new, but was promoted by early civil rights leaders such as Malcolm X, who said: "We are brutalized because we are black people living in America. We are not Americans. We were kidnapped and brought to America" (Brokaw, NBC Evening News, 1995, February 21).

These findings regarding the signification processes of the African American co-researchers are consistent with a *Time* poll of blacks about Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Of the 503 African American adults questioned, only 34 percent reported they believe Farrakhan and his message are racist, while 63 percent said Farrakhan "speaks the truth" (Henry, 1994, February 28, p. 22). Similarly, while 80 percent of the white population believed the Nation of Islam has too much power, only 2 percent of African Americans shared that belief (Henry).

Conclusion

I don't think we differ much from the crowd that accepted slavery 150 years ago. (Co-researcher 67)

There are significant racial differences in the signification processes of the co-researchers. The signification processes of the African American co-researchers seem to allow them to identify more easily with the symbolism of Khallid Abdul Muhammad's message and the societal biases represented in it than do the signification processes of the non-African American co-researchers.

There are, however, very few gender differences among the co-researchers' signification processes. The only gender difference is among the black co-researchers; although African Americans overall do not describe Muhammad's speech as racist, black women are almost twice as likely to interpret his words as constituting racism than the black men. Perhaps this gender difference may be explained by the patriarchal organizational structure of the Nation of Islam, where women do not hold leadership positions, and are relegated to housework and child rearing. If Nation of Islam religious services are overcrowded and seating is limited, women are expected to give their seats to men (Henry, 1994, February 28), and Farrakhan often gives lectures that are limited to men ("One-gender," 1995, February 18). In light of such institutional attitudes within the Nation of Islam that relegate women to secondary status, it is reasonable to assume that African American men are more inclined to identify with Muhammad and the Nation of Islam than are black women and, in turn, are less likely to question Muhammad or his message.

It is disturbing that many of the statements of the non-African American co-researchers reflect an acceptance of the belief that improvised and marginalized groups of people are responsible for their own oppressed state. This attitude is reflected in the following statements from white and Hispanic co-researchers: "It is my opinion and others, that the white man has more than paid up his so-called debt to the blacks" (103); "What happened a long time ago and the people who did it are dead, so why can't they forget it, we—the living—did nothing wrong" (69); "I've often had to hear professor drone on and on about the plight of Afro-Americans and how they were wronged. My opinion is, live with it" (76); "He [Muhammad] blames the white man for his troubles. That is a lot of crap.... If you're not strong enough or smart enough to fend for yourself, then you should blame yourself.... The whites aren't holding the 'black community' down, they hold themselves down. The government gives them so much support it's sickening, yet they still cry for more" (90). By accepting the ideal—if you just work hard enough you can achieve the American dream—the white population can deny any responsibility, personally and societally, for the inferior life experiences and opportunities of marginalized peoples. Perhaps this attitude is not surprising in an era in which House Speaker Newt Gingrich blames the "bad habits" of African Americans for most of their problems (White, 1995, June 26, p. 36).

As Crow (1981) argues, no phenomenological research claims to offer generalizability in its results. This study is no exception. Although the sex and racial composition of the co-researchers is diverse,[1] the co-researchers were all undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses, most 18-22 years old. Like most of Kean College, none of the co-researchers actually attended the speech on November 29, 1993. In fact, most students did not know anything about Khallid Muhammad's controversial speech until after the Anti-Defamation League published the excerpts in *The New York Times*. The co-researchers' reactions to Muhammad's message in this study are based primarily on reading the excerpts printed in the *Times* and what they subsequently heard about the speech from secondary sources. Three months had elapsed between the Muhammad speech and the time I asked my students to write their essays; [6] during that time, not only had the speech been placed on the national media agenda, but many Kean College professors had discussed the issues surrounding the speech with their classes. Even Kean's president, Elsa Gomez, felt obligated to send letters to all students enrolled at the college apologizing for Muhammad's words and his appearance on campus. Muhammad's speech was over two hours long, resulting in a 127-page transcript. Thus, it was not feasible to have students read and respond to the speech in its entirety.

Such limitations, however, do not automatically constitute weaknesses (Crow, 1981). The purpose of my study is not to predict how *all* people will respond to Muhammad's words, but to explicate receivers' meanings in a particular situation. Rather than discovering universal themes applicable to all similar material, Giorgi (cited in Crow) argues that the goal of phenomenological research is to explicate essential themes of a *specific* phenomenon. The data from this study thus provide further evidence of the "decoding processes audience members routinely employ" (Lull, 1987, p. 321) to construct their meanings of texts, in this instance, controversial texts. The data also suggest important areas for future research examining the reverse situation: the experiences of co-researchers to a white speaker saying similarly racist things about African Americans or other non-white groups.

Khallid Abdul Muhammad's speech was explosive, pushing the questions of what is acceptable speech to extremes and recasting the question of what kinds of expressions of anger are socially acceptable—for some, the Muhammad speech is a reversal of an unhappy era of U. S. history when whites could without impunity say the same kinds of things about blacks that Muhammad did about whites. For the co-researchers, such a radical reversal of the societal norm was provocative, and seen as either threatening or inspirational, depending on their pre-conscious reflective states. Whites tend to find the speech threatening, but for many African Americans, Khallid Muhammad and his controversial words may represent an affirmation of strength and character in their lives that non-African Americans may find unsettling. Consider that when Farrakhan visited New York City, 30,000 African Americans filled the Javits Convention Center. And when Farrakhan spoke in Atlanta in 1992, more African Americans attended his lecture than the total number of fans who attended the World Series (Henry, 1994, February 28). As Henry points out, many African Americans see a very different man and message in Louis Farrakhan and his aides than white Americans see.[7]

Endnotes

[1] A total of 105 essays were collected from the co-researchers. The breakdown of race and sex is: 48 women (14 African Americans, 12 Hispanic and 22 white); 57 men (15 African American, 3 Hispanic and 39 white).

[2] Only copies of the excerpts were given to the co-researchers. The title of the advertisement and all references to the Anti-Defamation League were deleted to avoid biasing the responses of the co-researchers.

[3] Students participating in this research were not merely survey ciphers, but true "co-researchers" in the process of understanding their experiences of Khallid Abdul Muhammad's "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews."

[4] Essays were labeled as follows:

1-14	African American women
15-29	African American men
30-51	White women
52-63	Hispanic women
64-101	White men
102-104	Hispanic men

[5] Statements from the co-researchers have not been altered; no corrections to grammar, etc. were made. These kinds of errors are noted by [sic].

[6] Essays were collected during the first three weeks of March 1994, prior to Louis Farrakhan's appearance at Kean College on March 28, 1994.

[7] My study in no way attempts to justify or to endorse the incendiary remarks made by Khallid Abdul Muhammad in his speeches at Kean College or elsewhere. Muhammad's speech and the ideas he represented at Kean were horrifying, and boded only bad things for hopes of a unified multicultural society. Such inflammatory speech and offensive attitudes only function to polarize us further, regardless of whether they are expressed by public figures such as Khallid Muhammad or David Duke. Indeed, perhaps the most difficult part of doing this research was separating my personal reactions to Muhammad's ideas from my analysis of the co-researchers' reactions. Despite my own sentiments on the topic, the goal of my study was not to make any moral judgments, but simply to explicate the different signification processes used by Kean College students to make sense of the speech and, in turn, to offer explanations to understand the differing experiences and subsequent interpretations of Muhammad's speech.

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Appendix B

In-class reaction paper

After reading the excerpts from Khallid Muhammad's speech given at Kean College, please write your reactions to his message. There are no right or wrong answers for this assignment. I simply want to hear your reactions to his speech.

About you:
Gender: ___M ___F

Race/ethnicity: ___African-American ___Hispanic
___Asian ___White ___Other (__________)

Student status: ___full-time __part-time
___Senior ___Junior ___Soph. ___Freshman

Age: ___ 18-25 years___ 26-30___ 31-40___ 41 or older

Noise and Signal as a Textbook Case:
Rhetorics of Mass Communication Inquiry

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Noise and Signal as a Textbook Case: Rhetorics of Mass Communication Inquiry

Mass communication textbooks are a representation of the knowledge claims of the field. They construct these knowledge claims in a rhetoric of conventions built upon *logos* or logic. They endeavor to eliminate the manipulative use of "merely rhetorical" communication, including any emotionally persuasive, ornamental, or situating characteristics. Rhetoric is thought to seek the goal of adherence, of the confidence and support of its audience, not truth (McGee & Lyne, 1987, p. 390). So they are written to remove "mere rhetoric" from any constitutive role in the knowledge claim itself.[1] Rhetorics of inquiry, on the other hand, turn their attention to these rhetorical matters, insisting that matters of style, persuasion, and situation are essential elements of these knowledge claims.[2]

In this paper I will tell a story of how mass communication is constructed through the rhetoric of these knowledge claims. Rhetorics of inquiry focus on the investigation and description of rhetorical practices, setting a goal of understanding how the mass communication field is constructed (Lyne, 1985, p. 68). Our perceptions of this community deepen through a number of these investigations. New rhetorical practices call for new rhetorics of inquiry, but each one is constructed from its own particular vantage point. Insisting that a monolithic rhetoric of mass communication inquiry is possible only recreates the limitations and totalizations that this approach attempts to eliminate.

Rhetorics of inquiry introduce vital insights to the ongoing projects of any discipline. As John Lyne mentions, the benefit to an individual discipline can be found in how it become more aware of its own rhetorical practices (1985, p. 72). My purpose is to present a convincing introduction to the tale of rhetoric of inquiry for mass communication and take advantage of this benefit.

This rhetoric of inquiry looks at the introductory sections of two mass communication books. Each book defines basic terms of mass communication presented through a constructed dualistic relationship. John Fiske (1982, pp. 1-24) discuss the definitions of "signal" and "noise." Warren Agee, Phillip Ault, and Edwin Emery (1982, pp. 3-11) use the terms "message" and "noise" to explore an analogous communication relationship. This rhetoric of inquiry will examine the constitutive rhetoric that can be found within the textbook sections themselves.

We can examine the particular choices made in the construction of these textbook sections as a route into their rhetorical dimensions. The first move goes from a situation within the logic (*logos*) of the definitions to the character and standing of the person making the definitional claim.

ethos

When we consider the statements of the author of a text, each statement that makes a knowledge claim does so from an author's situated point of expression. My focus on ethos is an attempt to understand the construction of the author as a rhetorical element within the statement. But just as we need to understand the author as a rhetorical element within the statement, we need to understand the statement within the community, which is how the pursuit of ethos leads to the evaluation of ethics:

> Rhetorical credibility is an ethical construct because it is an artifact of the relationships that compose communities as lasting fabrics of communication (Nelson, 1987, p. 427-429).

To understand ethos we seek the rhetorical standing of the author in terms of the atmosphere and spirit of the community.

The Agee et al text discusses "The Communication Process" (p. 6) in terms of how researchers have organized it into a series of sequential steps. The reader of the textbook is given the breakdown of the communication process in two different vocabularies, one of which translates the terms into "research language." The authors present the first set of terms (communicator, message, channel, audience) without further explanation, suggesting that this set of terms is common to both authors and readers of the textbook. The second set of terms (encoder, symbols, media, decoder) translates the "common" set into "research language." The authors' status is based on their facility in both vocabularies.

The section moves into the discussion of message and noise by introducing a third presence:

> The communicator also knows about the limitations and problems communication researchers have studied. One of these is *channel noise*, a term used to describe anything that interferes with the fidelity of the physical transmission of the message (such as static on the radio or type too small to be read easily); but broadly speaking, channel noise may be thought of as including all distractions between source and audience...The professional communicator helps overcome its effects by attention-getting devices and by careful use of the principal of *redundancy* (repetition of the main idea of the message to ensure that it gets through, even if part of the message is lost) (Agee et al, 1982, p. 6).

The third presence is the communicator, later amended to become the professional communicator. The authors indicate that the professional communicator knows about the work of communication researchers. The authors then fill in the communication world for the reader; professional communicators, informed by the "problems communication researchers have studied," overcome the effects of noise through the practice of their profession. The authors grant the researcher group an expert's perspective over the limitations and problems of communication. They situate the practices to deal with these problems in the role of the professional.

The authors are insiders, speaking to outsiders, possibly as aspiring professional communicators or as researchers. Within the text the implication that "communication should be handled by professionals" is more pronounced. The author describes a circle of communication practices, ascribes attributes of language, sensitivity, and practice to different groups, and maintains a position of mediation between them. The author's ethos is valued in making introductions of the groups to the reader. But the groups remain faceless and non-specific. The languages, sensations, and practices are not attached to individuals.

The other textbook adds flesh and blood to the role of the researcher. In his presentation of noise and signal, John Fiske locates the "signal" inside the model designed by Shannon and Weaver (Fiske, 1982, p. 7-8). Fiske attaches a person and a time to the model. We need to ask, though, whether this has any meaning in relation to the rhetorical construction of the author's ethos within the text. We can focus on Fiske's writing about noise, when he tries to relate it to Shannon and Weaver's communication model:

> The one term in the model whose meaning is not readily apparent is noise. Noise is anything that is added to the signal between its transmission and reception that is not intended by the source. This can be distortion of sound or crackling in a telephone wire, static in a radio signal or snow on a television screen. These are all examples of noise occurring within the channel and this sort of noise...is Shannon and

> Weaver's main concern. But the concept of noise has been extended to mean any signal received that was not transmitted by the source, or anything that makes the intended signal harder to decode accurately...Noise, whether it originates in the channel, the audience, the sender, or the message itself, always confuses the intention of the sender, and thus limits the amount of desired information that can be sent in a given situation in a given time. Overcoming the problems caused by noise led Shannon and Weaver into some further fundamental concepts (1982, p. 8-9).

The author explains the connection between the named researchers behind the model and its theoretical framework, but then he offers his own definition of noise to elaborate the model. The idea of these models is important enough to be included in his textbook, but not without interjecting authorial voice. He changes the model when he adds his own amendments to the discussion. Shannon and Weaver's model becomes "Shannon and Weaver's model through the rhetoric of Fiske." At first the connections ground the model in its history and origin, but then the connecting process itself becomes the grounding.

In Fiske's text the authorial ethos is constructed at the intersection of the historical and disciplinary context of the model and the context of the re-presentation in the textbook. At this intersection ethos is based on the importance of the model to the field. Fiske begins the section by mentioning how Shannon and Weaver's theory "is widely accepted as one of the main seeds out of which Communication Studies has grown" (1982, p. 6). Once the author has invested in the significance of the model his commentary, if successful, builds on the back of the credibility already established. The community constructed along with the author's ethos must be invested in theoretical traditions where such modeling is still a valid reference point.

If we compare the ethos of the two textbook sections they call on different foundations for their standing. The Agee et al ethos constructs relations from itself to specific groups which handle communication. The field is conceived as a circle of interdependent professional divisions, including the movement of academic research into the tent of professionalism. Knowledge of each group validates the author. The Fiske ethos positions itself in relation to a selected historical construction of the field, where communication is presented as a model of a process. The representations of knowledge within the legitimated "heritage" of communication supports the credibility of the authorial voice.

The "complex phenomenon" of ethos, as understood by Carolyn R. Miller and S. Michael Halloran, is a combination of two distinct vantage points:

> On the one hand, it is the distinctive "voice" of an individual or a tightly knit collaborative team. On the other, it is the spirit or group character of a broader community of speakers. What makes ethos one concept rather than two is the fact that the individual voice is always heard and interpreted against the background of the group character that gives it "authority," while the group character is, conversely, at stake in the performance of the individual (1993, p. 121).

This mutual investment between the community and the speaker allows for the construction of a field through the rhetoric of its inquiry. We must carefully note how the mutual constructions take place, particularly where textbook knowledge is concerned. The background authority of the knowledge claims are offered against a broader audience base, beyond the community of speakers, to include a community of learners.

pathos

Where ethos considers the two dimensions of the author's standing and the construction of the community, pathos considers the two dimensions of emotions inscribed within a communication and the situation of readers or listeners. For this rhetoric of pathos we look to the textbook examples to find "the emotion that the speaker aims to induce in his audience (sic)" (Lanham, 1991, p. 111).

Pathos is more than a supplement in our communication. We speak in terms of arguments, even when the language of our discussion speaks in terms of knowledge claims. The etymology of "claim" locates its origins in shouting and crying out. When we simplify claims to mean no more than assertions we discount the sense of agonistics, the emotional component built into the insides of our communications. So more than a supplement, pathos describes the inevitability of feeling as a component of any human communication. The attempts, in certain research areas, to instrumentalize the observation process further obscures the agonistic aspect of communication. As long as communication remains human, however, it employs elements of a rhetoric of inquiry into itself. Rather than looking for these emotional expressions at the margins or the liminal areas of a knowledge claim, Nelson, for instance, suggests that we regard the agonistic experiences as "de-centered or multi-centered complexes of diverse passions and images" (1991, pp. 73-79). Thus the quest for the rhetoric of pathos situates these emotions within the communication process, detectable within an utterance, but ultimately connected to diverse parts of the community formed in the communication. The agonistics are ways of understanding the situation of readers or listeners.

We can enter the investigation of pathos through similar points raised in the previous discussion of ethos. The Agee et al text presents a discussion of noise as a problem "[t]he professional communicator helps overcome" (p. 6). The "problem" language reappears through the discussion of noise, making it difficult to feel any differently about it than this hypothetical professional, who "de-bugs" these problems out. We are presented with "*channel noise*," which "interferes with the *fidelity* of the *physical* transmission of the message" (p. 6, emphasis added). The language the authors have chosen to discuss channel noise has an underlying intimation of a physical threat, which fits in with the authors' attempt to ally the trust of the reader with the skills of the professional for protection and defense from this interference.

We are also presented with "*semantic noise*," where the problem can appear as a misunderstanding even when the message was received exactly as transmitted; the misunderstanding comes from the communicator using language "unfamiliar to an audience member," or having a different meaning for the communicator and the listener respectively. Agee et al respond that,

> Semantic noise can be reduced if the communicator will take pains to define terms and adjust vocabulary to the interest and needs of the audience. Sometimes, difficult or strange words are understood because the reader grasps the context in which they appear, but it is also possible for a poorly defined word to be misunderstood this way. And if the material presented is too complex, the reader either will be forced

> to regress and restudy the message, or more likely, will turn to some other more rewarding and pleasant material (1982, p. 7).

We are presented with a complicated evocation of the responsibility of the communicator to the audience, but now consequences await the unsuccessful practitioner. To communicate, one must be vigilant to adjust, and be wary of complexity, or the audience will *regress* to look at the message a second time (which sounds almost immoral and at least painful); or, even more disastrous, the audience might choose to look elsewhere for the rewards of a more "pleasant" message. These dangers of semantic noise are corrected only if the (professional) communicator "takes pains."

Agee et al construct their pathos in elaborating the effects of the practice of the communicator. For the reader of the text, the consequences raise the stakes of professional choices and, at the same time, make the communication process more specifically hazardous.

The pathos constructed in the Fiske text is also connected to the author's previously discussed ethos. Fiske decided to invest in the historical contexts of the discipline when he discusses signal and noise. The pathic component inscribed into his presentation are tied into value judgments of ideas. For example, the Shannon and Weaver model presents communication as "a simple linear process," and this "simplicity has attracted many derivatives, and its linear, process-centered nature has attracted many critics" (p. 6). The "derivatives" are sympathetic to the cause of the Shannon and Weaver model; but the "critics" discussed here are not simply observers, but those who criticize, find fault with, disapprove of, and denounce. The historical moment, in Fiske's presentation, is contentious and agonistic.

When he moves to the idea of noise, his language is, at least initially, less based on "noise as problem" than Agee et al. "Noise is anything that is added to the signal between its transmission and reception that is not intended by the source" (p. 8). Later, however, he adds that noise "has been extended to mean any signal received that was not transmitted by the source, or anything that makes the intended signal harder to decode accurately" (p. 8). Fiske is attempting to clarify a term whose meaning was "not readily apparent" in the model, but gives credit to Shannon and Weaver for seeing this problem and leading the discussion into "further fundamental concepts" (p. 9). Problems that arise through noise are at the onset understood and dealt with through further investment in theorizing. Fiske supports his foundation in the historical contexts of communication modeling with more historically contextualized research.

The reader's faith is directed to the recognition of the benefits of research activities and modeling. The feedback for the researchers, from observing the limitations of their model, is sufficient to elicit proper responses to solve the model's problems. We should note that this relationship between the reader and the researcher is forged (mediated) through the problems of the model and not the problem of noise. Fiske, though, returns to the emotive side of noise when explaining the uses of feedback;

> Feedback, then, has this one main function. It helps the communicator adjust his message to the needs and responses of the receiver. It also has a number of subsidiary functions. Perhaps the most important of these is that it helps the receiver to feel involved in the communication. Being aware that the communicator is taking account of our response makes us more likely to accept his message: being unable to express our response can lead to a build up of frustration that

> can cause so much noise that the message may become totally lost (p. 23).

We can note how the built-up frustration and the increase in noise cause the message to become lost. Just as Agee et al inserted the language of physical threat, a conflict between noise and signal seeks a release of tension, which suggests a sensed, felt, physical effect (to say the least). If we take the language as emotional rather than physical, we are in a realm where individuals seek attention. They want to be looked at as well as listened to. The need could be satisfied through feedback, but if unattended we will lose the message in a spoiled child's crying and stamping fit of noise.

In both cases, the hazards of noise are presented through devices of pathos. The audience of readers, listeners, and mediating instructors moves between several emotive positions, the kind of de-centered identities needed to construct the community in emotive terms. In Fiske we have positions akin to frustrated spoiled children, frustrated lonely men, and communities dependent on experts. In Agee et al we have regressing distracted audiences, frustrated lonely men, and a sympathy toward the immense burden on the shoulders of communicators. We find in the pathic language of each textbook section an agonistic aspect that reflects their respective structures of communities of communication. They build with (construct) as well as build within (instruct), to connect to the mediating instructors, who then build their lessons, along with these evocations, within the readers of the text.

The community of mass communication discussed so far is built on the selection of words and how they indicate the situated relationships and the emotional transmissions of textbook knowledge claims. If we try to gain a larger perspective of the community into which the text fits, we should also consider the particular position of textbooks as the ways in which the community tells stories to itself.

mythos

I have assumed that the placement of logos inside of a rhetoric of inquiry is accomplished by extending ethos and pathos, so that we can become more familiar with our practices of inquiry. Familiarity leads to situating logos within the speaker, the audience, and the community. Each of these situations of logos is larger than logos itself, and though we think of logics as a communication free from storytelling, we can recontextualize the logics of inquiry within a framework of storytelling.

The storytelling framework, the mythos, concerns the origins, narration, and figuration of the communication (Nelson, 1991, 73-79). Whether the communication appears to be a story or not is a question of how we look at it. Rhetoric of inquiry insists that the perspective of mythos informs both the shape and the limitations of the issue at hand. In discussing rhetoric (of inquiry) as configuration, John Lyne retells the stories of two anthropologists, Misa Landau and Renato Rosaldo, who sought better understandings of their discipline's objects through larger and more complicated stories and the related narrative attitudes brought to the discipline:

> They pointed toward a rhetoric that pivots less on arguments and evidence than on narrative and imagistic structure. And in these cases, at least, the attitude seemed mot merely one of wanting to "debunk" and purge imagery, but of seeking fuller, more appropriate, and politically aware ways of configuring the relevant research (Lyne, 1985, p. 69).

Not only is this expanded narrative perspective needed to configure relevant research, but the ability to determine the relevance of that research is mediated through the rhetoric of mythos, through our acknowledged or unacknowledged narrative practices. When we consider the reproduction of the knowledge gained through the mythos of "relevant research," we need to bring these considerations of mythos along. There is as much of an influence of narrative attitude in textbook knowledge claims as there is in the attitude brought to the research process.

Some of the narrative elements in the textbook sections under examination have become obvious through the considerations of ethos and pathos above. Agee et al find the origins of their story in researchers who have looked at the communication problem and present a series of solutions. As each new problem arises we can trust that the researchers will find the proper response. They communicate the need for changes in the practice of professional communicators. The communicators take actions that make communication safe for all. Safety is freedom from noise, and we are safe from it when the intended communication is not impeded on its path.

The text constructs a narrative pattern that cycles from action, to disruption, to correction. This narrative is built into the Agee et al text, narrating the story of communication to a readership of "would-be communicators" (p. 9). The story outlines the steps that such a person would need to go through. The narrative operation implies a connection between the reader and the character in the story, or the "role" of the communicator. Although the career-track kind of implication is not overtly stated, particularly through professional training, the textbook begins by suggesting how few of "us fully realize the extent of our involvement [as] citizens of today's world... in an outpouring of mass communication" (p. 3). The story says that we should be wary of our involvement in communication, that so many are unaware, and that we need to learn our roles as communicators.

The Agee et al narrative wants us to return to a fable of proper preparation It warns us of dangers, but also gives us a hero in the guise of a professional communicator. The narrativized version of "message and noise" in this text instills faith in the system of research and expertise in the reader.

Fiske's narrative begins with a similar statement of the few and the many,

> Communication is one of those human activities that everyone can recognize but few can define satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another, it is television, it is spreading information, it is our hair style, it is literary criticism: the list is endless. This is one of the problems facing academics: can we properly apply the term 'a subject of study' to something as diverse and multi-faceted as human communication actually is?" (1982, p. 1).

The answer is provided through the efforts of the author-as-academic, and it turns out to be yes, and is explained through the rest of the text. The pattern of the story in Fiske's mythic terms pits the crusade of the academic, the researcher, and by extension the reader into the role of a slayer of the Hydra-headed beast of communication. Every time we define an element of communication in an effort to find the boundaries of the "subject of study," even more communication appears outside the boundaries we just laid down. We define when we commit ourselves to theoretical positions. We believe that defining is controlling. Fiske's narrative sees the defining academic as the best hope for taming the beast.

In between bouts, we recall the past triumphs of the family line and recall its finer battles. To pursue this moment of the narrative, Fiske gives us the lineage of communication scholarship, like a wall of paintings along the stairway of the manor house. At the top, or maybe even over the fireplace, is the portrait of Shannon and Weaver. In between our battles and arguments, we commune with our heritage, learn from their wise choices, nod at their failings and go on to fight again.

These are familiar story forms, and in their familiarity rests their power. The fable quality that comes through when I discuss the story may sound oversimplified, but it follows the path traced by the narratives we all know so well. The myth explains through the story, through the "rhythms established among plots, characters, symbols, and similar components (Nelson, 1991, p. 73-79).

tropos

One series of these components of mythos helps explain the larger rhetorical process. The arguments in the textbooks are tales told through a narrative inscribed within them. The narrative does its work through the turns of the story through the tropes it deploys in the telling.

Two senses of tropes can be developed which may be thought of as a kind of cutting across a switchback road. The first sense recognizes the necessary skipping and jumping since we don't have infinite time to tell our story. "All arguments must be elliptical, we might say: since we are not gods, we can never give an exhaustive articulation of any argument" (Nelson, 1993, p. 92). So we try to cut straight down from one level of the switchback to the next one down, using tropes as the figures and turns to keep control. We use these turns in stories and arguments to get down the mountain faster.

The second sense of trope is a way in which Thomas Kuhn tried to describe formal proofs, when tropes were seen as "rhetorical figures which, by substitution, disclose unsuspected consequences of the meanings of the terms they deploy" (Kuhn, attributed in Simons, 1985, p. 55). These are the tropes that lead us to see the purpose of the switchback and draw our attention to the potential consequences that lead from our choices.

The Agee et al text tells its tale through figurations that make the journey more compact, like the first sense of tropes. These figurations personify roles in the communication process and place the reader into a role in the story as a communicator, simulating the experience of a professional communicator in a small, metaphorical form of the communication process. The reader is given a test drive of the "message-noise" experience seen through the eyes of researchers, professional communicators, and their students.

The Fiske text uses the second sense of tropes, when a figure is employed to change the thinking strategy in the story. The model is a figuration in itself, created as a simulacrum of the communication process. The story of building the model continues with the appraisal of its limitations, which the builders hope will correspond to the communication process itself. Disaster strikes the model builder whose model shows problems, but they turn out to be the problems of the model itself, not the object the model was attempting to configure.

In each case the tropes reflect a miniature portion of the operations of the larger mythos. They explain the particular figurations of the rhetoric of mythos. When combined with narrations and originations, these rhetorics of mythos allow us to understand how knowledge claims are simultaneously performed through narratives and rhetorical turns, as they are supported, backed, and warranted through logical reasoning. The narratives I have discussed so far have been presented in the most all-encompassing versions as I have found available, making connections between my own experiences and the language of the textbooks. We finally need to turn to the genre of the textbooks and their appeals through logos to explore why my development of these rhetorics needs to be qualified within my own experience.

textbooks and the rhetorical construction of the field

We can see how a single rhetoric of inquiry would fail, totalizing any other isolated rhetorical aspect and returning to the limitations found in the arhetorical logos form. A plurality of rhetorics of inquiry would be necessary to fully situate a communication. [3] I selected the textbook genre [4] because the textbook form most presents itself as the foundational, rational claims of a field's knowledge. Textbooks try to appear free from the influences of "mere rhetoric" in their construction. They also claim to resist influencing the reader or mediating instructor through the use of rhetorical tricks.

These rhetorics of ethos, pathos, mythos, and tropos were used to expose the rhetorical construction in the text. The speaker must have a standing in relation to the community to whom he or she is speaking in order to speak; human communication is inescapably related to our emotional states and our reactions, since they form our situation as audiences for the text; and a central "in-structure" that allows us to communicate, to both speak and to listen, is our sense of stories and narratives, told in figures, through which we construct the community and experience the "thickness" of our surroundings.

Despite all efforts to the contrary, textbooks are a genre that can not help but reflect the concerns of constructing the disciplinary community. A rhetoric of inquiry offers a plurality of routes to understand the community;

the constructed ethos as the rhetoric stands among other kinds of argumentation, the pathos with which it socializes the audience of speakers within the discipline, and the mythos and tropos displayed in its configuration of knowledge claims. We can situate these "functions" of the rhetoric of inquiry into the discipline represented through its textbook knowledge claims (Lyne, 1985).

rhetoric as argument - the ethos of the field

Lyne raises the question as to whether rhetoric of inquiry should look at arguments within or across academic paradigms, or instead be concerned with the problems of attempting to engage a wider public (1985, p. 66). He then points out that the connected implications of expertise are rhetorical constructs as well. Textbook knowledge makes its weakest presentation when trying to ignore its own construction, or its own rhetoric.

rhetoric as socializing discourse - the pathos of the field

Academic rhetoric, a discipline's language, is the essential glue that binds different intellectual interests, and makes that discipline cohere (Lyne, 1985, p. 67). The rhetoric of inquiry of any discipline is self constituting, but, as Lyne points out, in two simultaneous directions. It socializes and pulls together, but it also specializes, like a vocabulary becoming jargon. In the Agee et al text, the need for the different language of the professional is not explained. Textbooks have some socializing influence on a discipline. Their logos may communicate didactically, but their rhetoric should not remain unaddressed. And their rhetorical influences will have already escaped into the constructed community and will have to account for its knowledge claims.

rhetoric as configuration - the mythos and tropos of the field

The use of narrative thinking allows the study of rhetoric and the study of communication to learn from literary approaches (Lyne, 1985, p. 69). Within these approaches, questions of meaning and social construction arise through the rhetoric of inquiry shared by these fields. These approaches value reflexive moves that address rhetorical concerns, but no signs of such self-knowledge are directly addressed in the textbook sections under review. At the same time, my discussion supports the significance of these rhetorics as they are inscribed in the textbooks, even to the specifics of defining noise and signal.

The question becomes whether knowledge claims are stronger or weaker when presented in such non-reflexive rhetoric. I have approached these textbooks through a rhetoric of inquiry to show how the "signal" or "message" of knowledge claims is articulated to bury its rhetorical construction in "noise." As the construction of the discipline moves forward, we need to seriously consider the advantages of becoming aware of all that we include when we construct our knowledge claims.

Notes

[1] An odd symmetry of appearances arises when logic and rhetoric are separated. "Truth" is seen as *rhetorically* neutral, neither created through persuasion nor persuasive toward any opinion. Rhetoric, at the same time, is *morally* neutral, "capable of giving equal expression to truth or superstition or whatever else is necessary in the quest for a favorable judgment" (McGee & Lyne, 1987, p. 391). Thus the danger of rhetoric becomes plain, capable of serving both falsity and evil;

> According to modern convictions, rhetoric in a well-tempered polity remains subordinate to the true and the good. Only when temperance disappears do we really need rhetoric. For rhetoric is dangerous....conjured into substance, it fosters perversions (Nelson & Megill, 1985, p. 20).

This attitude can be seen in the anti-rhetorical tendencies of science, philosophy, religion and law, continuing from the original subordination of rhetoric to logic, through the Enlightenment and the Romantic age (Bender & Wellbery, 1990).

[2] The return of rhetoric was made possible through several modern developments. Three of are noted here both because of their influence on the return of rhetoric and their central importance to the rhetoric of inquiry (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 23). First, the foundationalism of philosophical inquiry was replaced by scholarly practices that could account for themselves. Philosophy would no longer be the universal foundation beneath and therefore the authority over other disciplines. Second, the picture of science was being reconstructed. Thomas Kuhn, for example, explored persuasive practices within a community whose evidence is incomplete and uncertain. James Boyd White adds that

> The idea of science as perfect knowledge has of course been recently subjected to considerable criticism, both internal and external. It is now a commonplace that scientific creativity is imaginative, almost poetic; that scientific knowledge is only presumptive, not certain; and that science is a culture that transforms itself by principles that are not themselves scientific (1987, p. 301).

Third, epistemology was reconceptualized to allow rhetoric to be a site for producing and shaping knowledge, as well as communicating it. The "thick descriptions" of Clifford Geertz best demonstrate how the rhetorical aspects of culture are sites of knowledge construction. Each of these influences on the return of rhetoric occurred within disciplines which intended to conduct their investigations through reason, and sought to produce knowledge untainted by rhetoric. Instead their "logic of inquiry" was capable of only accounting for their logics and methods. When these influences began to display aesthetics, histories, and narratives that produced knowledge suffused with rhetoric, "logics of inquiry" were superseded by rhetorics of inquiry (Nelson & Megill, 1986, p. 25).

[3] There are degrees of rhetoric--extra-factual or extra-logical factors--that differ from one case to another, as much as there is a sense that some situations are "more rhetorical" than others (Simmons, 1985, p. 59). So each rhetoric of inquiry develops its own dimensions, based on the degree and kind of rhetorical angles that cohere in a claim.

[4] In discussing within disciplines, Charles Bazerman identifies the intersection of genre and spatial relations;

> Texts are written and read locally, but with consideration of the context of other relevant localities with which the texts serve as a link. Moreover, the transmission of texts among locales, the development of regularized forms of texts (genres and conventions), and the development of standardized procedures for handling texts and relating them to other disciplinary activities can create structural homologies among various locales, bringing them into a similar, and perhaps continuous, social space (1994, p. 105).

As much as tropes create a path inside of a communication practice, a rhetoric of genres could establish the outer dimensions of the communication. Such a rhetoric could investigate the conventional practices that situate a communication among others, and look at how this situating effects the construction of the communication.

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Implications of Audience Ethics for the Mass Communicator

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Implications of Audience Ethics for the Mass Communicator

It is not unusual for commentators on the mass media to ascribe certain responsibilities to audiences of mediated messages. For example, columnist David Broder concludes his critique of the modern press by admonishing the reading public to read critically. The press's presentation of reality is distorted by journalists' presuppositions and prejudices, Broder admits, so readers must "correct the 'spin' those twists impart" (1987, 366).

While Broder suggests vaguely that the media audience member must "hold up" his/her "end of the dialogue" with the press, others have been more explicit in assigning a responsibility to the audience. CNN anchor Bernard Shaw, on a C-SPAN panel to discuss infidelity allegations against then-candidate Bill Clinton, remarked that the media were duty-bound to report the allegations and the public had the responsibility to assess the accuracy of the reports (Altschull, 1992, 3). Les Brown, suggesting a rights-based ethics for television viewers based on case law and the Constitution, argues that citizens have an obligation to assert their statutory rights and become "a conscience imposed on an industry obsessed with increasing its revenues and profits" (1979, 10). Doig and Doig urge mass media audience members to be "consumer/editors" paying attention to "nuances of the news" and evaluating the evidence presented in news reports, balancing themselves "between gullibility and cynicism" and demanding information needed for making informed self-rule and consumer decisions (1972, 16, 60).

Mass media ethicists, however, rarely include audience responsibilities in their discussions of mass media ethics (Cunningham, 1992, 239). Ellul (1981) and Moran (1979), however, discussed audience ethics in relation to propaganda, and Johannesen (1990, 1979) considered audience responsibilities as an aspect of the ethics of persuasion. In addition, Code (1987) and Stocker (1982), writing within the philosophical framework of epistemology, argue that receivers of messages have responsibilities. Code, for example, argues that an individual ought to preserve a degree of objectivity, think clearly, and be responsible for what one knows (1987, 68). There has been little attempt, however, to explicate a theory of mass media audience ethics.

Literary and speech theorists, on the other hand, have written extensively about the "ethics of reading," rhetorical ethics, and the function of writing (Clark, 1990; Miller, 1987; Bazerman, 1980; Farrell, 1983, 1976; Johannesen, 1971; McKeon, 1975; Perelman, 1963; and Rosenfield, 1980). And others have written about the conversational or dialogic model of communication and the communication model of reality, which have relevance to a discussion of audience ethics (Baynes, 1994; Fish, 1980; Habermas, 1989; Rehg, 1994; Warner, 1992; Kreckel, 1981;

Todorov, 1984; Stuart, 1978; Bennett, 1985; Sullivan, 1965; Bitzer, 1980; Burke, 1969, 1973; and Bruffee, 1986). Taken together, the concepts of the ethics of reading, epistemic ethics, and the social construction of reality through public dialogue can contribute to an enriched understanding of mass media audience responsibilities.

Moreover, an understanding of audience ethics, in turn, sheds light on the responsibilities of mass communicators. For if, as Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggest, reality is socially constructed and, as Burke (1969) and Bakhtin (1981) argue, meaning is created through a dialogue between the message sender and the message receiver(s), the importance of ethical communication is evident. It follows, then, that ethical public dialogue is crucial if ethical choices on questions involving public issues and policies are to be made. This becomes particularly important considering the recent encouragement of "public," or "civic" journalism (Miller, 1994; Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg, 1994; Rosen, 1993; Lambeth, 1992a; and Clark, 1990).

The ethical responsibilities of journalists, public relations practitioners, and other public communicators, when seen in the light of audience ethics, go beyond the traditionally noted duties derived from either the Aristotelean-based conception of the right-acting practitioner, the critical studies concern over political economy, and the communitarian synthesis of the two.[1] All three perspectives locate ethical behavior in the message sender(s), and without consideration of the role of the audience, the resulting lists of requirements for ethical practice are limited.

This paper first repositions the audience into the equation of mass communication ethics and then outlines the corresponding ethical requirements for audience members and mass communicators.

The Concept of Audience Ethics

To say that mass media audience members have responsibilities in the communication process implies a theory of mass communication that posits 1) an active audience and 2) a role for audience members in creating the meaning of the mass communication messages.

Media scholars working from a variety of theoretical perspectives have accepted the concept of a mass media audience with some level of activity in relation to media messages (Burton, 1990, 153-156; Jensen, 1986). Considerable disagreement remains, however, over the degree to which audience members can affect the meaning of a message. At one extreme, critical and cultural industry theorists, as well as agenda-setting theorists, generally argue that the mass media manipulate audience members (Grossberg, 1984; Williams, 1975, 1977, 1980; Althusser, 1969, 1970, 1971; Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972; Gitlin, 1980; Schiller, 1986; Altschull, 1984; Entman, 1989; and McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Noelle-Neumann, 1984; Altheide, 1976). At the other extreme, semiologists and some structuralists situate control of a message's meaning totally in the audience (Fish, 1980; Fry and Fry, 1985; Barkin and Gurevitch, 1987; Liebes and Katz, 1988; Wren-Lewis, 1983; Scholes, 1982). Occupying a middle ground, social and meaning constructionists argue that meaning occurs through negotiation between the message sender and the message receiver (Geertz, 1973; Tuchman, 1978; Hall, 1982; Jensen, 1986; Burke, 1969; Bakhtin, 1981; Barthes, 1977; Park, 1940).

Morgenstern (1992) offers a reasonable integration of theories through the use of lay epistemic theory. She argues that audience autonomy:

> is a capacity one can exercise to different degrees at different times, that is both *made possible by* and *confined by* the amount and kind of culture and information accessible, the relative accessibility of alternative theories of the world, and opportunities within the community in question for critical discussion and (informal) prediction and testing (306, italics and parenthesis in original).

It is within this context of social constructionist theory coupled with Morgenstern's conception of individual audience members as "theorists in their own right" that the concepts of mass media audience ethics and mass communicator ethics become intertwined.

For social constructionists, mass communication is dialogic or conversational in the sense that reality is socially constructed through public discourse carried and encouraged by mass media (Anderson, et al., 1994; Dewey, 1954). Clark (1990) distinguishes between eristic discourse and dialectic discourse. "Discourse that is eristic in its purpose treats knowledge as something we possess and language as the vehicle we use to transport what we know to others" (21). In this conception of discourse, the message sender assumes the authority of "one who has privileged access to truth" (21). Linear conceptions of mass communication theory and much that is taught about mass communication ethical decision-making conceives mass communication as eristic. To see discourse as dialectical, however, is to treat knowledge as "current consensual interpretations of common experience, and language as the activity of social interaction through which people develop those interpretations and share them" (21). In this conception of mass communication, the message sender becomes but one voice in a "pluralistic process of collaborative exchange through which a community of equals discover and validate what they can collectively consider true" (21). It is this dialogic conception of mass communication that is embraced by Anderson, et al., in The *Conversation of Journalism* and is found in the writings of Carey (1989), Dewey (1954) and Park (1940), among others.

From the social constructionist perspective, Clark (1990) explains,

> we communicate with others who share similar experiences for the purpose of coming to a common understanding of our circumstances, an understanding that not only binds us together as a cooperating

> community but also provides a foundation for our continued communication (4).

This "understanding" is the "images in our head," as Lippmann (1922) called them, that control how we respond to public issues and public policy decisions. Lay epistemology shows how that understanding develops in the individual from exposure to experience, ideas, and facts, which in industrialized societies often come from the mass media (Morgenstern, 1992).

Audience ethics focus on the responsibilities of mass media audience members as they are exposed to "experience, ideas, and facts" presented by the mass media. It is incumbent upon audience members to actively engage in the conversation of public discourse coming to them via the mass media if the discourse concerns matters of public policy. It is not enough for audience members to cancel subscriptions, change channels, or, indeed, even to adopt resisting or opposing interpretations (Cohen, 1994, 99-100; Condit, 1989, 110). Ethical behavior as a member of a democratic society demands more. If audience members demur to the mass media's message either by ignoring it, unilaterally interpreting it, or by uncritically accepting it, they risk becoming irrelevant to the governing process by "allowing the discourse that addresses them to define their beliefs and values for them, to stand among them as unmediated assertions of power" (Clark, 1990, 49). To repeat Broder's admonition, audience members must hold up their end of the conversation.

Positioning mass communication as a dialogic exercise between mass communicator and audience member(s) enriches the conception of mass media ethics. To be a member of a conversation inherently means that certain behaviors occur, *must* occur, if there is to be a conversation. These ethical requirements apply as well to instances of public dialogue. To fail to meet them allows the discourse to deteriorate into soliloquy by the message sender, which is seen by some researchers as inherently an unethical communicative act (Clark, 1990, 21; Cunningham, 1992, 238-240; Sullivan, 1965).

Being involved in a conversation carries certain obligations (Johannesen, 1975, 53-56; 1980). In the context of public discourse, these expectations are applicable to both audience members and public communicators. They include:

1. Be motivated by social and professional ethics in one's desire to communicate.[2]

2. Be fair in one's arguments and use of evidence and be fair in one's assessment of others' arguments and evidence.

3. Be accurate and truthful in what you say, in what you hear, and in how you interpret what you hear.

4. Be open to alternative understandings and opposing evidence. Be willing to be persuaded when good arguments are made; admit errors when wrong.

5. Be respectful of others in the conversation, respecting them as individuals or, in the case of news organizations, as individual institutions.

6. Provide effective feedback and use feedback received.

7. Foster an atmosphere of openness, freedom, and a willingness to resolve conflicts that need resolving and reach understandings.

The use of reader ethics theory and epistemic responsibility theory, furthermore, can be used to suggest some audience responsibilities that are specific to people *as members of an audience of mass communication in a democratic society*.

Code (1987) argues that people must have good reasons for "what they claim to know or understand" (12). To say, then, that something is true because it was printed in a newspaper or shown on a video or broadcast on a television show is not sufficient evidence that it is indeed true. Audience members must evaluate media messages critically, assessing the evidence that is presented, comparing and contrasting the information to past knowledge, and demanding narrative cohesiveness from the message.

Code further argues it is epistemicly irresponsible to believe something "for which the evidence is scanty" or to believe something so confidently that evidence suggesting something different is systematically or categorically ignored (90). She also classifies negligent examination of evidence as a type of irresponsibility (91).

Ellul (1981) argues that people manipulated by propaganda participate in the manipulation because propaganda fulfills their desires for simplistic solutions to complex social problems, confirmation of existing prejudices and beliefs, affirmation of self-worth, and other unconscious desires of people living in a technological world (121). Cunningham (1992) stresses that the "propagandee is not an innocent victim" but, rather, a willing participant in the "pattern of co-dependency and addictiveness in which, paradoxically, the propagandee progressively surrenders the power of choice by choosing to reduce it" (240).

It is only through ethical viewership or readership that mass media audience members can effectively respond to the potentially dominating message of the mass media. By engaging the mediated message and joining the public dialogue, audience members empower themselves and their fellow community members. Engagement of the mediated message can be as private as thinking about the message or can become more public by discussing the message with family members, friends, or community members.

Engagement of mediated messages can involve being quoted in a news story or writing a letter to the editor. The engagement can be carried even further, though, when one feels compelled to do so. An assistant principal of a public school in Mobile, Alabama, joined the considerable public dialogue about whether children from low-income families should receive federally funded free breakfasts and lunches at school. In response to discussion in the news columns, in letters to the editor, and in the local daily newspaper's reader call-in comment column, as well as a guest editorials, Principal Gillion wrote a guest editorial column. "All of us are aware of the newly loud voices of our middle class screaming about the government wasting tax dollars," Gillion wrote. And, answering those voices, she continued: "We cannot and should not enjoy this life and expect to pay no dues and have no responsibility for those who do not have . . . an abundant life" (Gillion, 1995). In this way, Gillion added her voice to the public debate.

A citizen in Omaha, Nebraska, took another route to engage the local mediated message. Although having no prior training or experience in journalism, Frances Mendenhall began a monthly newspaper, the *Nebraska Observer*, in which she and others responded to stories and editorials appearing in the local daily newspaper and reported on issues not covered by the city's mainstream paper. Her explanation for the venture was that she "and a lot of other Nebraskans with a taste for public issues began seeing that the *[Omaha] World Herald* was either not reporting or under-reporting taboo subjects" (McCarthy, 1991).

Clark (1990) stresses that public rhetoric is "inevitably propelled by private purposes" that must be overcome by the people to whom the rhetoric is addressed (56). "Although no rhetorical statement can be pluralistic in its purpose," Clark asserts, "the people it addresses can make it pluralistic and thus public in the way that it functions within their community" (56). The people do this by countering the rhetoric with their own alternative visions with which to judge the rhetoric's truthfulness. "They expose that rhetorical statement as an assertion of an ideology, judge it as such, and present in response alternative ideological claims for public consideration" (57).

Only when mass media audiences assume the responsibility of answering the rhetoric of the media outlets and their sources can they nurture democracy and counter the "mediaspeak" described by Cross (1983) and the media dominance and control described by Schiller (1973) and Altschull (1984). If the social constructionists are correct that reality is negotiated through public dialogue, "we must hold ourselves responsible for that meaning we help to make" (Clark, 1990, 9; Bakhtin, 1981).

Mass media audience ethics, then, can be summarized by the following rules:

1. Agree to converse. Agree to engage in the public dialogue. Talk back to your TV sets, your newspapers, and your magazines.

2. Demand sufficient evidence before you accept a report or story as representing a truthful account.

3. Retain a healthy degree of skepticism even when you are willing to accept a report as truthful. No report can be the final word. What will the next report say? What will the next source tell you? Truth-seeking about public and social issues must by nature be a continual process. It can never be an arrival.

4. Identify and challenge ideologies of message senders. What unspoken beliefs about the world have molded and shaded the message being sent?

5. Recognize and challenge private motives of public communicators. What hidden agendas have affected the message?

6. Bring to a mediated dialogue one's own understandings derived from past experiences and fact gatherings and contrast and compare them in a critical way with the mediated message. Insist that the message's narrative "hang together" in a logical manner. Insist that it make sense before you believe it.

Responsibilities of the Message Senders

Once the audience becomes repositioned as a participant in public communication, the concept of communicator ethics broadens. It is not sufficient to limit the discussion of ethical principles for journalists or public relations practitioners and advertisers to the Aristotlean ethical principles of truth-telling, humaneness, autonomy, stewardship, and justice (Lambeth, 1992b; Fink, 1994); or to reduce the ethical obligations of public communicators to the clarity of rules such as "do no harm," "be courageous," "keep your promises," "be honest," and other strictures outlined by Ross (1930) and Gert (1988). These are sufficient when outlining the duties and responsibilities and virtues of the journalist or public relations practitioner. But when the individual journalist or public relations practitioner is seen as a party to a public dialogue, the range and nature of responsibilities are broadened and enhanced (Anderson, 1994, 183-188; Newcomb, 1991).

The ethical purpose of public communication is not to transmit information objectively or describe reality to an audience, nor to impose a dominant interpretation of reality. It is to enter into a collaboration with the audience to constitute reality (Clark, 1990, 1; Anderson, et al, 1994, 14).

For the connection between journalists or public relations practitioners and their publics to be truly a collaboration, rather than an attempted imposition of the public communicators' view of the world, the communication must be a conversation, or a dialogue. Clark (1990) explains:

> When we assert as complete and absolute truth what is really but one interpretation, our discourse is eristic in its attempt to impose that interpretation upon others. But when we present an interpretation to others for them to judge, opening it to their modifying response, we contribute through our discourse to the kind of dialectical exchange that enables people to

> collaborate in discovering and validating what they can collectively consider true (19).

Sullivan (1965) argued that all assertions of truth are by nature tentative and incomplete and, therefore, any public communication should be made in recognition that more information always will contribute to a better understanding of reality. According to Sullivan, public communicators should operate in such a way as to provide information that is as accurate and complete as it is possible to ascertain and to encourage members of the public to contribute additional information or analyses. This demands the creation of feedback mechanisms that are easily accessible and inviting to audience members.

James Agee and Walker Evans (1966) provide one of the better examples of journalism that meets the requirements of openness, recognition of vulnerability as to truth-telling, and willingness to have readers participate in the creation of meaning. Agee begins *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* with a staking out of territory that declared upfront the limitations of journalism. "I can tell you of him (his subject) only what I saw, only so accurately as in my terms I know how," Agee writes (11). Fishkin (1990) argues that Agee's insight was that the book "would be 'true' only to the extent that it acknowledged its own incompleteness" (149). Agee, in a passage that captures the ethical implications for journalists and their audiences of writing about the lives of real people for readers who likely will have little in common with his subjects, continues:

> I am liable seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, to obscure what would at best be hard enough to give its appropriate clarity and intensity; and what seems to me most important of all: namely, that these I will write of are human beings, living in this world, innocent of such twistings as these which are taking place over their heads; and that they were dwelt among, investigated, spied on, revered, and loved, by other quite monstrously alien human beings, in the employment of still others still more alien; and that they are now being looked into by still others, who have picked up their living as casually as if it were a book . . . (11-12).

In the book's preface, Agee alerts readers that they are "no less centrally involved than the authors and those of whom they tell," and he invites readers to write Evans and him to actively "participate in the subject, in whatever degree of understanding, friendship, or hostility" (*xv*).

Obviously, daily journalists could not and should not try to match Agee's journalistic soul-searching on each story they produce. There are stories, however, that would justify statements from the reporters and editors that acknowledge they hold no monopoly on truth and/or invite readers to contribute to a public understanding of the issue at hand. Newspapers and magazines already do a version of this when they solicit reader stories about "My Favorite Christmas Memory" or other such feature. Soliciting expanded reader discourse on a public issue would not be that foreign to newspaper editors. Existing letters to the editor columns and reader/viewer editorial columns help, but space limitations and required standards of rhetorical skill restrict participation. Open phone lines that allow readers and viewers to express opinions for publication or broadcast have the potential of offering a convenient and non-threatening forum for public discourse. However, care must be taken so that the only comments from the public are not truncated into sound bites, which limit their usefulness to public dialogue (Anderson, et al., 34). *USA Today*, for example, provided several methods for readers to respond to its comprehensive examination of guns and violence in the United States (Dec. 29, 1993). Under a headline on the editorial page reading "Tell us your gun story," *USA Today* editors solicited reader comments by prominently displaying its letters-to-the-editors address, its fax number, a toll-free number for the hearing-impaired, and a toll-free number for the general public. The editors asked readers to "tell USA Today readers how guns or gun violence have affected your life" and declared that they wanted "to hear from both sides in this serious national debate [about gun control]." They promised to publish selected reader responses in future editions of the paper, and they did that the following week. This solicitation for public comments was placed next to a "person-on-the-street" feature in which a dozen citizens from across the country were photographed and quoted about the handgun issue (*USA Today*, Dec. 29, 1993, 10A-11A).

The Charlotte *Observer* has also reached out to readers. During the 1992 presidential campaign, the paper invited citizens to take part in the news coverage by helping to define the issues about which the candidates would be asked (Rosen, 1993, 8). When this concept of inviting public participation was expanded to the presidential debates, undecided voters (selected by the Gallup organization) were allowed to ask questions of the candidates alongside selected journalists. Researchers found that the citizens asked questions on different topics than those asked by journalists, and their questions were less likely to be argumentative, accusatory and leading -- characteristics deemed to be ineffective according to earlier research (Eveland, McLeod, and Nathanson, 1994, 404).

Encouraging dialogue with audiences adds voices to public discourse and provides sources of analysis and information that may not have been available from the media outlets alone. This is important because if the mass media fail to provide accurate or adequate information about public matters, members of a community may not be exposed to the ideas and facts they need. "We should," Morgenstern (1992) argued, "consider . . . the mass media's power to define the epistemic boundaries within which audiences will (actively) test, reaffirm, or change their beliefs" (306, parentheses in original).

Open dialogue channels, however, allow audience members to contribute to the definition of the epistemic boundaries. This occurred, for example, when anti-abortion activists challenged the Clinton administration's portrayal of surgeon general nominee Dr. Henry Foster. The first news reports of Foster's nomination reported his background as a ob/gyn specialist in Alabama and Arkansas with a reputation for fighting teen-age pregnancies. Foster acknowledged performing fewer than 12 abortions. But within hours, an anti-abortion activist from Pittsburgh had dug out a transcript from 1978 in which Foster testified at a Seattle meeting of the Ethics Advisory Board to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare that he had performed "probably near 700" abortions. The activist posted this information on a computer bulletin board and on the Internet, prompting more people to dig in files and enter into the public record more information about Foster. As a Knight-Ridder wire service story published in the *Mobile Register* reported:

> Now, the fax machine and the computer Internet are connecting the far-flung housewives and their files to national groups such as the National Right to Life Committee that can immediately wire the information into congressional offices and news bureaus throughout the country (Feb. 16, 1995, 10-A).

One anti-abortion lobbyist was quoted as saying that prior to the new information from the anti-abortion activist being made available, opposition to Foster was predictable Washingtonian rhetoric. "But once the hard stuff (the activist's facts from the transcript) came out . . . it changed the whole complexion of the debate," he said (*Mobile Register*, Feb. 16, 1995, 10-A).

New technology has opened avenues of dialogue between citizen-activists, policy makers, and journalists, changing the composition of the public debate. Whether this will lead to a fuller and more informed public dialogue has yet to be examined.

To summarize, ethical obligations of mass communicators participating in public dialogue include the following:

1. In addition to being accurate, comprehensive, and fair, mass communicators need to recognize they do not monopolize truth. Their messages should be presented in such a way as to acknowledge this.

2. Mass communicators ought to provide easily accessed avenues for audience responses to media messages and aggressively encourage reader/viewer participation in the creation of public messages, and hence, the creation of reality.

Conclusion

Audience ethics and mass communicator ethics are complementary and reflexive. They expand the conception of mass communicator ethics, yet coordinate with recognized mass media ethical principles outlined by Lambeth (1992) and Fink (1994). They extend the ethical considerations, but they do not replace them. The common ethical responsibilities of all who participate in a conversation or dialogue, as outlined by Johannesen (1975), are similar to the ethical principles of truth-telling, humaneness, autonomy, stewardship, and justice (see Table 1). In addition, each of the ethical obligations incumbent upon the mass communicator has a counterpart obligation attributable to audience members. This is to be expected in an ethical theory based on the value of dialogue and conversation.

Table 1

Audience and Communicator Ethics Matrix

Common Responsibilities	Mass Comm.	Audience
Accuracy Truthfulness Fairness (truth-telling and justice)	Motivated by professional ethics	Motivated by social ethics
Openness to alternative understandings/opposing evidence and show respect to the "other" (humaneness)	Provide feedback channels	Be willing to engage in public discourse
Foster atmosphere of openness, freedom, and willingness to resolve conflict (stewardship and autonomy)	Present message in such a way that limitations are acknowledged	Demand sufficient evidence, retain skepticism, challenge ideologies and motives motives, contribute own understandings

By positioning mass communicators within a public dialogue in a democratic society, the ethical obligations of audience members and communicators are revealed to be more demanding than previous theoretical discussions have indicated. These obligations and the more effective means of carrying them out need to be further revealed and analyzed through future research.

Notes

[1] Aristotle, "The Nicomachean Ethics," in H. Gene Blocker, ed., *Ethics: An Introduction*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Haven, 1988), 389-448. For a modern interpretation applied generally to social practices, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd Ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), esp. 146-255. Edmund B. Lambeth, *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession*, 2nd Ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), applies Aristotlean ethics specifically to journalism, see especially pages 11-93. For political economic perspectives, see J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (New York: Longman, 1984), esp. 179-205; and Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 4th Ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). Clifford G. Christians, John P. Ferré and P. Mark Fackler, *Good News: Social Ethics and the Press* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) synthesizes the two and offers with a communitarian approach.

[2] For a discussion of both social and professional ethics, see Christians, et al., *Good News*. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, and Lambeth, *Committed Journalism*, provides additional insight into professional ethics.

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TELLING LIES: THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF LIES IN SITCOMS

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ABSTRACT

TELLING STORIES: THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF LIES IN SITCOMS

This study examines how lies are portrayed in popular sitcoms in terms of their prevalence, cultural meaning, ideological function, and implications. Episodes of five top-ten sitcoms were analyzed, including "Coach," "Mad About You," "Home Improvement," "Roseanne," and "These Friends of Mine." The results showed that characters lied frequently, casually, and largely without consequences, and did so primarily as a means of negotiating power or expressing powerlessness. The implications of these findings is discussed, including how the portrayal of lies on sitcoms serves commodity culture goals.

TELLING STORIES: THE SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF LIES IN SITCOMS

Of the variety of media texts singled out for analysis by critical researchers, situation comedies have received persistent attention (e.g. Cantor, 1990; Goodstein, 1992; Miller, 1986). Their pervasiveness, prominence, accessibility, and unflagging focus on family life and relationships have marked them as a rich source of insights into the values, interests, and ideology of the dominant social class (e.g. White, 1992). Media scholars have approached sitcoms from a variety of research perspectives, including how they depict class (e.g. Thomas & Callahan, 1982; Butsch, 1992; Freeman, 1992), race (e.g. Gray, 1986; Atkin, 1992; White, 1991), gender (e.g. Dow, 1990; Hanke, 1990; Steeves, 1987; Ferguson, 1990), and the workplace (Taylor, 1989), and the ways in which they discourage (Duncan, 1962) or advance (Murphy, 1989) "progressive social change" (Horowitz, 1987).

This study examines how sitcoms portray an important aspect of the American moral landscape: deception. Exploring how popular culture texts represent what Sissela Bok calls the "everyday dilemmas of truth-telling" (Bok, 1978, pp. xix-xx) sheds light on how the mass media advance "collective social understandings" (Hall, 1982, p. 70) of appropriate moral and ethical beliefs and behavior. Few researchers have focused on how television programs portray ethical and moral behavior. Of these, most have explored depictions of morality generally (Lidz, 1984) or have targeted sexual morality (Cantor, 1991). Only one study--a quantitative approach to the problem--has examined the prevalence of lies in sitcoms

(Leslie, 1992). Lacking are critical studies investigating the cultural meaning and implications, as well as the quantity and character, of prime time portrayals of deceit.

In an attempt to fill this gap, this article not only examines the prevalence and types of deception in popular sitcoms, but explores lies in terms of their context and ideological function. The study consists of three parts: The first section discusses situation comedies as a central repository of persuasive messages about morality--or about "the standards by which we should evaluate ourselves" (Orlik, 1988, pp. 201-202). The next section provides a brief discussion of some of the implications of lying for individuals and society as a whole. Finally, the third section offers an analysis of how lying is portrayed in several popular sitcoms, followed by a discussion of these findings.

Situation Comedies and the Construction of Morality

On the surface, the plots and characters of television comedies appear to mirror reality. Marc, for example, describes these programs as the "living room within the living room, the mirror of family life, the barometer of the normal" (Marc, 1989, p. 127). But, as Cantor points out, domestic comedies "do not necessarily reflect family life as lived by most Americans. Nor do they reflect the larger social and political contexts in which most Americans live" (1991, pp. 205-206). Rather, like all television fare, sitcoms act to "certify reality" (Gitlin, 1977, p. 790). through the production and selection of symbols "used in making meaning and action" (Saenz, 1992, p. 37). Moreover, as a number of media scholars have argued, they use and arrange these symbols for *persuasive* effect (e.g. Rybacki et. al., 1991, p. 262; Gray, 1991, p. 295; Dow, 1992, p. 144). That is, they "present, shape, and support a particular view of reality, a subjective view that is both value-based and constructed" (Loeb, 1990, p. 249).

Among the ways in which these shows promote a particular value-based view of reality is through their emphasis on moral and ethical messages. "[T]elevision shows participate deeply in American *moral* culture," Lidz writes. "They are saturated with moral themes" (1984, p. 267). Cantor describes domestic comedies as modern "morality plays" or sermons that preach family values as the route to the American Dream (1991, pp. 205, 214-215). And Rybacki and Rybacki note that television programs, through the accumulation of moralistic messages over time, construct "a sense of how one ought to think and act" (p. 256).

The notion that the moral and ethical content of television entertainment figures heavily in the creation of social norms finds support in the growing secularization of American culture. Since the Enlightenment, the influence of organized religion has gradually waned, replaced by a "secular moral culture" (Kreiling, 1984, p. 45) with the mass media at its core. Moral authority--once the provence of religious institutions--has largely passed to the mass media. As Goethals observes, even the elaborate ritualism found in traditional forms of worship is now expressed through the "vivid presentations of television" (1981, p. 271).

Within this framework, it is evident that situation comedies not only deliver potent, value-laden meanings, but serve as nothing less than surrogate sources of moral and ethical guidance for members of society who have rejected--or no longer have access to--traditional religious teachings. As Marc writes,

> The situation comedy imbues the banal with potent allegorical force. Structurally didactic, the genre functions as a lighthearted, forgiving guide to the conscience for fans who remain unmoved by the book-thumping polarities of either the fundamentalist clergy or the secular humanist faculty....(p. 161).

But television's moral and ethical themes possess an even more important function: to legitimize and maintain existing power structures. As Enzenberger and others have noted, "[T]he main business of television is not so much the selling of specific products as the selling of an existing order" (Marc, p. 160). In this view, television entertainment promotes the "secular moral order"--which, in turn, is concerned primarily with "the legitimation of our principal social institutions" (Lidz, p. 268).

Social Meaning and Implications of Lies

What social impact and meaning--if any--do lies have? This question has occupied philosophers from Aristotle and Aquinas to Kierkegaard and Freud. If a single thread runs through Western intellectual discourse on the topic, it is this: that deception is both evil and dangerous. In fact, few human behaviors have inspired greater fear and universal condemnation--or have had a more profound impact on the development of Western moral and intellectual culture. As Rue (1994, p. 4) writes,

> One cannot adequately understand history, nature, personality, and society without also understanding the nature and function of deception....[T]he intellectual and moral traditions of Western culture have been shaped and driven by an explicit and consistent fear of deception. The fundamental values of Western culture--as expressed in religious doctrines, philosophical principles, theories of mental health and social progress, and even the scientific method--have found legitimation in their perceived power to safeguard humans against the danger of being deceived.

The "cultural bias against deception" (p. 82) is apparent in all American institutions. Not only do churches, schools, businesses, and government outwardly uphold honesty as a virtue, but all have developed rules and consequences to discourage dishonesty. As Saarni and Lewis observe, "[I]n the United States lying is considered a very significant negative activity" (1993, p. 13).

Yet, paradoxically, Americans remain remarkably equivocal about this cultural taboo.

As anthropologist F.G. Bailey observes, "There is marked ambivalence and considerable confusion about truth itself: we profess to adore it but also sometimes find it threatening.... [And] some forms of untruth are admired" (1991, p. xvii). The complex range of attitudes surrounding deception is borne out by the astonishing number of words used to describe it: The English language contains roughly 500 terms for "lie," including duplicity, distortion, deceit, dodge, evasion, equivocation, falsehood, fraud, and fib (Rue, p. 83).

In addition to attracting negativity and ambivalence, lies possess specific social and cultural meanings. Of these, contemporary scholars have emphasized two important aspects of lies. The first is their relationship to power, and the second, their effect on social stability.

Lies and Power. According to experts on the cultural meaning of deception, lies and power exist in close proximity. "Truth and deceit are inextricably entangled with power," Bailey states (p. xvii). Bok makes a similar assessment: "To the extent that knowledge gives power, to that extent do lies affect the distribution of power," she writes. "[T]hey add to that of the liar, and diminish that of the deceived, altering his choices at different levels" (p. 19). Even when deception occurs in the most primitive, non-Western cultures, anthropologists have found that it typically involves "aggression and power" (Saarni and Lewis, p. 21).

More specifically, because the intent of deceit is to mislead, take advantage of, coerce, or even destroy others, lies signify the site of *power struggles* between individuals, groups, or ideologies within a society. Hitler's successful propaganda campaign, which resulted in mass deception of the German people and wholesale subversion of the country's democratic institutions, provides a classic example of the link between deceit and hegemony. According to Rue, the consensus among World War II historians is "that if deception had been avoided, the Holocaust would not have occurred"(Rue, p. 81). As one historian observed, "Hitler's aim was total power, and his strategy was to deceive. He selected top party officials by the standard of their competence to deceive" (p. 79, citing Fest, 1970).

Of course, Hitler and Nazi Germany are not the only examples of the kinship of lies and power. Study of the rise and fall of any social movement--from women's rights and gun control to black liberation and fundamentalism--reveals "the rhetoric of deceit" at work (p. 81.) As Rue notes, "[H]istorians consider deception to be a dominant factor in disruptions of social progress....One looks in vain for evidence to oppose the hypothesis that where there are notions of social progress, there also are notions about deception" (p. 81).

Lies and Social Stability. In addition to illuminating sites of power struggles, lies threaten both individual relationships and social cohesion. Christians, et. al. (1993, p. 79) stress the harmful effect of lies on human interaction: "[L]ies violate human community and empower the liar at the expense of the person who is duped. Lying operates in the I-It modality and thus renders liars as well as their victims subhuman." Bok echoes this viewpoint. "Deceit and violence--these are the two forms of deliberate assault on human beings," she writes. "Both can coerce people into acting against their will" (p. 18). She also warns of the capacity of lies to siphon power from others and deny knowledge and choice to their victims.

But the potential of lies to cause injury is not confined to individual relationships. "The very nature of lying entails harm of [an]...insidious and pervasive nature," writes Solomon. "Every lie undermines our confidence in the veracity of speech, and at some critical point our very language becomes meaningless" (1993, p. 30). This idea stems from the belief, articulated by St. Augustine, that, "When truth has been broken down or even slightly weakened, all things will remain doubtful" (Bok, p. xv). In this view, even "white lies"--falsehoods "not meant to injure anyone, and of little moral import" (p. 58)--can result in cumulatively harmful consequences. Moreover, the risks associated with lying "are increased by the fact that few lies are solitary ones" (p. 25). Lies tend to spawn more lies, which, in turn, may "lead to habitual disregard for truth and...a climate in which deceit prevails" (Bailey, p. 7). In an extreme case, such a climate threatens the basic currency of society: trust. Bok, in particular, warns of the corrosive effect of lies on the integrity of social discourse:

> Imagine a society, no matter how ideal in other respects, where word and gesture could never be counted upon. Questions asked, answers given, information exchanged--all would be worthless. Were all statements randomly truthful or deceptive, action and choice would be undermined from the outset. There must be a minimal degree of trust in communication for language and action to be more than stabs in the dark. This is why some level of truthfulness has always been seen as essential to human society, no matter how deficient the observance of other moral principles....A society...whose members were unable to distinguish truthful messages from deceptive ones, would collapse (p. 18).

Some of the most scathing attacks on lies disseminated in the mass media have been advanced by critics of advertising. In his classic article on advertising's unintended negative consequences, Richard Pollay (1986) strikes out at the widespread use of exaggeration, intimation, and outright lies to sell products and consumer lifestyles and to mold public morals and values. He argues that the "ceaseless flow of half-truths and careful deceptions" (citing Heilbroner, 1977, p. 113) that issue from television advertisements have taught Americans "a national tolerance of falsehood, exaggeration, and distortion." He charges that advertising's distortion of language is transforming Americans into "a community of cynics" who have learned to doubt virtually all traditional sources of wisdom (p. 29). The logical outcome of this distortion and the cynicism it engenders "is the normlessness known as anomie"--a faithless, isolating state in which individuals--unable to trust each other or their social institutions--exist without virtue of communication or community (p. 29). Like Bok, Pollay emphasizes the corrosive effect of lies on trust--the "mortar for social cohesion" (p.

29).

From the above discussion, it is apparent that lies hold important social and cultural meanings. Of these, the link between deception and power is particularly relevant for mass media research. If lies signify sites of *power dynamics* within society, we may assume that the presence of lies in popular culture texts says something about latent or disguised *power struggles* between competing individuals and groups. Such struggles erupt over what Hall (1980) describes as "negotiated terrain"--sites where conflicts over meaning and the authority to represent it take place.

The impact of lies on *social relationships* and *stability* has slightly different implications for mass media research. Assuming, as many scholars believe, that lies erode trust between individuals and cumulatively compromise the integrity of social systems, analysis of the portrayal of lies in popular media texts should reveal something about areas of vulnerability and stress--or actual fissures--in social arrangements.

To summarize, several important justifications exist for analyzing how lies are portrayed in television sitcoms: First, such analysis adds to knowledge about the ways in which the media provide social instruction on moral and ethical behavior. The public relies on powerful cultural institutions such as television for the images, symbols, and language necessary to interact with and understand the social environment. As Bok maintains, "The social incentives to deceit are at present very powerful; the controls, often weak. It would be wishful thinking, therefore, to expect individuals to bring about major changes in the collective practices of deceit by themselves" (Bok, p. 244).

An additional rationale relates to the hegemonic properties of lies. As Fiske writes, "Characters on television are not just representations of individual people but are encodings of ideology, 'embodiments of ideological values'" (Fiske, 1987, p. 9). Research on lies in situation comedies should shed light on the specific groups and ideologies involved in *power struggles* within society, as well as the cultural and social contexts in which these conflicts occur. Finally, this type of analysis provides insights into the *cultural functions* performed by mass media portrayals of ethical and moral behavior.

Method

For this analysis of lies in situation comedies, five popular 1993-1994 programs, including "Roseanne," "Coach," "Mad About You," "Home Improvement," and "These Friends of Mine,"[1] were selected. These programs were selected on the basis of their consistently high ratings.[2] A total of 18 episodes broadcast between March 29 and April 20, 1994[3] were examined in terms of the following research questions: How prevalent are lies in situation comedies? What types of characters (male, female, children, or adults) lie most frequently? What types of lies do characters tell? What events and situations trigger falsehoods? And what consequences, if any, do characters face as a result of lying? And finally, what cultural and social *function* do lies in situation comedies perform?

This study adopted Bok's definition of a lie as "an intentionally deceptive message in the form of a statement" (p. 15). Emphasis is placed on *intentionality*: Characters had to engage in what Bok describes as "clear-cut lies--lies where the intention to mislead is obvious, where the liar knows that what he is communicating is not what he believes, and where he has not deluded himself into believing his own deceits" (p. 16). Because this research was designed to gauge the pervasiveness, range, consequences, meaning, and significance of lies in popular situation comedies, characters' deceptive *acts*--as long as their intent appeared to mislead or hide the truth--were also considered "clear-cut lies." On the other hand, generally secretive behavior or more "marginal" forms of deception such as "evasion, euphemism, and exaggeration" (p. 242) were not considered "clear-cut lies."

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[1] "These Friends of Mine" was changed to "Ellen" at the start of the 1994-95 season.

[2] At the end of the 1994 season, all four of these situation comedies ranked in the top 10 programs on prime-time network television, as measured by the Nielsen ratings. Carmody, John, "The TV Column," *The Washington Post*, (April 20, 1994):D8.

[3] Included in the sample were: six episodes of "Coach," five episodes of "Roseanne," three episodes each of "Coach" and "Mad About You," and two episodes of "These Friends of Mine." The large number of "Coach" episodes included in the analysis resulted from the network broadcasting two episodes of "Coach" per week for several consecutive weeks in April. All episodes analyzed were from the 1993-1994 season, although most were repeats from earlier in the season.

Telling Stories: Lies and Deceit in Sitcoms

Lying was a pervasive phenomenon in the sitcoms analyzed. As Table I shows, more than 80 percent of the 18 programs examined contained clear-cut lies or intentionally deceptive behavior. Female characters lied more often than male characters--but were also more often "victims" of lies. Parents lied in front of and to their children; spouses lied to each other; and not surprisingly, children lied to parents and siblings alike.

Based on this study's findings, when situation comedy characters lie or engage in intentionally deceptive acts, they do so for three reasons: (1) to negotiate power and/or protect relationships; (2) for personal gain; and/or (3) to protect their egos. The type of lies appearing in the sitcoms depended to a large extent on the types of characters and families involved, as well as the balance of power within relationships. Domestic comedies such as "Roseanne," "Coach," "Home Improvement," and "Mad About You" tended to show characters lying in order to protect relationships--or more precisely, to negotiate power and/or autonomy within them. On the other hand, "These Friends of Mine"--a sitcom featuring young, urban singles--was more likely to show characters lying for personal gain or to protect their egos.

Table I. Analysis of Number of Lies in Selected Sitcoms

No. of Episodes	Sitcom	No. of Episodes with Lies	Total Lies (All Episodes)
5	Home Improvement	4	7
5	Roseanne	3	19
3	Coach	3	9
3	Mad About You	3	11
2	These Friends of Mine	2	11
18	**TOTALS**	**15 (83%)**	**57**

Lying to Negotiate Power and to Protect Relationships

Given the largely domestic emphasis of the genre, it is not surprising that situation comedies frequently feature characters who lie to avoid conflict, disappointment, and anger--or to resolve power struggles--within domestic arrangements. Critical feminists have found that sitcom narratives frequently deal with "negotiation of oppositional ideology" (Dow, 1990, p. 261)--or with "the tension that exists between the poles of feminism and patriarchy" (p. 271). In this analysis, lies designed to protect relationships or resolve power struggles often involved attempts on the part of husbands to escape the displeasure of their wives. Hayden Fox of "Coach" exemplifies the male sitcom character who--although happily married on the surface--appears conflicted about his autonomy and role within the marriage. Story lines in "Coach" often center on Hayden's struggle to preserve his freedom and masculinity in the face of feminine encroachment.

A "Coach" episode about an unsuccessful camping trip illustrates Hayden's use of lies to reassert the power and independence that he feels he may have lost as a result of marrying

Christine. In one scene, Hayden tells Christine that he wants to accompany her to the ballet, while what he *really* wants to do is to go fishing with the "guys." To resolve the conflict, he attempts to manipulate Christine by telling her that he would like to spend more time with her--and therefore wants to take *her* fishing with him and his buddies. Not realizing that he's hoping she'll turn down the fishing trip, Christine goes along on the expedition--which, of course, spoils the experience for Hayden. With his wife along on a classic example of a "sex-segregated ritual" (Saarni and Lewis, p. 22) the great outdoors and rustic cabin no longer represent meaningful symbols of escape and restoration of masculine independence.

Eventually, Hayden becomes so frustrated with Christine's invasion of male turf that he lashes out at her. They fight, after which she reassures him that she hates fishing and outdoor life and--content and relieved--Hayden leads her off to the bedroom to "make up." As a part of an entrenched sitcom pattern, no serious negative consequences result from dishonesty. Instead, Hayden's lies--as well as the problems that they spawn--serve as grist for comedy.

In a similar way, "Home Improvement's" Tim Taylor uses lies--also shrouded in humor--to protect his relationship with his wife while resisting changes in the power dynamics of the marriage. In one episode,[4] Tim is seen standing in front of a heap of dishes in the sink, bragging to his youngest son, Mark, that (real) men never wash dishes as long as a single clean utensil can be found. Almost immediately, Jill returns home from her new, part-time job and asks Tim why he hasn't done the dishes. Tim nervously replies that he didn't realize the dishes were dirty--a clear-cut lie told in front of his son. When his son tries to correct the lie, Tim scoots him quickly from the kitchen before he can do so.

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[4] Broadcast on April 13, 1994.

Although Tim's lies are inspired by some of the same tensions that lead Hayden to deceive Christine in "Coach," key differences exist in the two characters' approach to lying. First, Tim lies to Jill significantly less often than Hayden lies to Christine--an indication, perhaps, of Tim's greater security and comfort with his masculinity and power status. And second, although Tim expresses his irritations and frustrations with marriage to his neighbor over the fence, his anxiety appears almost superficial when compared to the abject fear that Hayden evinces through his lies and intricate deceptions. For instance, in another episode of "Coach,"[5] Hayden deceives Christine about a $15,000 motorcycle that he bought for the stated purpose of asserting his masculinity. By the end of the show, he still hasn't worked up the nerve to tell Christine. Instead, he and his hapless sidekick, Dawber (who bought an identical motorcycle and also lied to his fiancee, Judy), hide out from their women, cramped and smothering in the dust-filled crawl space under Hayden's house. It is difficult to imagine "Home Improvement's" Tim Taylor feeling the need to deceive or hide from Jill to such an extent--or to end up in such a weakened and compromised position.

Another difference between the two shows involves the distribution of lies by gender and age. Perhaps because "Home Improvement" depicts a nuclear family (with three children), while "Coach" focuses on a married couple with no children at home, the lies in "Home Improvement" are distributed more evenly among all family members--including the children. In "Coach," on the other hand, adult, male characters engage in virtually all of the lying. Christine, in particular--who projects a highly idealized form of femininity (replete with lofty moral principles and a saccharine temperament)--was never shown telling a lie. In contrast, Jill on "Home Improvement" lied frequently and in equal proportion to her husband. In fact, in one episode, she actually *helped* her youngest son, Mark, mount a complicated deception in order to "pay back" his older brothers. The two older boys had lied to Mark earlier, telling him that the basketball star, Isiah Thomas, was coming to the Taylor house for dinner. When Jill discovered the lie, she and Mark crafted a letter "from" Isiah Thomas. She then read the letter to her two older sons--who, of course, responded with shock and humility. The *consequence* of the lies told by Jill and the boys are of interest: Mark, who obtained retribution, responded with glee; the two older boys appeared sheepish and embarrassed; and Jill appeared righteous and smug. Except for the humbling of the two older boys, the results were positive, and Jill delivered no verbal admonishments against lying. The implicit message was that Jill--the parent and only adult in the situation--reacted to it a highly responsible and appropriate manner.

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[5] Broadcast on April 12, 1994.

The lies in two additional situation comedies--"Mad About You" and "Roseanne"--also functioned primarily to protect relationships and negotiate power arrangements. "Mad About You" features a young, newly married couple named Jamie and Paul who live in an apartment in New York City. In an episode reminiscent of the motorcycle debacle in "Coach,"[6] Paul lies to Jamie about a $5,000 investment that he has made without consulting her. When she suspects his deception and confronts him about it, he attempts to evade her questions, but finally admits to investing the money behind her back. She reacts with anger and later exacts revenge by stopping payment on his $5,000 check (without telling him). Much bickering ensues, but in the end Jamie agrees to go along with the investment.

Although these deceptions involve clear attempts on the part of the couple to negotiate power between them, the lies involving power struggles in "Mad About You" were not limited to their personal relationship. Perhaps indicative of their struggle to break free of *parental* hegemony, Jamie and Paul also frequently lied to their parents. In a typical scene, Paul and Jamie tell Paul's mother that Paul is going out of town so that they can avoid a visit from her. She comes to their house anyway, and Paul creeps from room to room to keep her from seeing him. Finally, he is forced to crawl out the bathroom window--which, of course, his mother accidently locks from the inside. He ends up trapped out on the ledge in a thunderstorm, shivering and looking silly.

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[6] Broadcast on April 21, 1994.

As with Hayden's experiences in "Coach," humiliating scenes such as this may signify circumstances in which characters symbolically play out powerlessness by attempting --and failing--to gain autonomy. Perhaps because of their youth (and subsequently lower position in the social hierarchy), Jamie and Paul express powerlessness *as a couple* more frequently than in the sitcoms discussed previously. United against their parents and the world, they struggle for control, acceptance, and domination over their environment. In one episode, they even lie to their *dog* in a futile attempt to get him to go to the vet.

In terms of characters' lies and motivations for lying, "Roseanne" is perhaps the most complex of the situation comedies discussed so far. Unlike the couples in "Coach," "Home Improvement," or "Mad About You," Roseanne and her husband, Dan, do not lie to each other so much as they--or actually Roseanne--lies to her children, friends, parents, co-workers, and everyone else. One explanation for the fact that they seldom lie to each other may be that, as an older couple, Dan and Roseanne Conner have long since resolved the power relations in their marriage. But class may also be an issue in the types of lies appearing in "Roseanne." Like Jamie and Paul in "Mad About You," Dan and Roseanne stand on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. As a struggling, blue-collar family, they use deception more in an attempt to wrest power and control from the *outside* world than to resolve internal power dynamics.

Although all members of the Conner family lie, Roseanne engages in deception most frequently and also actively attempts to foster lying in the rest of the family. Her lies appear to function on two levels: as jabs at middle-class morality and as symbols of the powerlessness and chaos of her life. The show's Halloween episode[7] illustrates both of these functions. As the story unfolds, a character named Nancy--a co-owner of Roseanne's sandwich shop--tells Roseanne that she doesn't think that Dan likes her. Although this is true, Roseanne denies it out of the fear that if Nancy knew the truth--that neither Dan nor Roseanne like her--she might sell her share of the business to Leon (whom Roseanne likes even less). In order to prevent this, Roseanne tries to pressure Dan to tell Nancy that he *does* like her. Their conversation reflects the anger and irony that are hallmarks of the show:

> [Roseanne]: You've got to do it....
> [Dan]: No, Roseanne, I'm not going to tell her I like her because I don't like her!
> [Roseanne]: Well, I know. That's why you have to...tell her that you like her. You never tell people that you *like* that you like them. The only people that you ever tell that you like are the people that you actually *don't* like!
> [Dan]: Okay, I'll do it.
> [Roseanne]: Really?
> [Dan]: Of course not. The only things you have to say you're going to do are the things you have *no intention* of doing.

Despite this interchange, Roseanne tells Nancy that Dan likes her so much that he wants her to go to the Halloween party as one of the Conner family. When Nancy questions the veracity of this statement, Roseanne "confides" to her that Dan has only been *pretending* to dislike like her as part of a special Halloween "prank." Events become increasingly complicated as lies become intertangled with "pranks," but by the end of the episode,

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[7] Rebroadcast on April 12, 1994.

Roseanne successfully recruits Dan into the lie. Meanwhile, after Roseanne's son reveals the truth about yet another lie that Roseanne, Dan, and one of their daughters are involved in, Roseanne reacts by harshly scolding her son: "All right, young man!" she says to him. "Who taught you to tell the *truth*?"

As this example shows, Roseanne lies both in an attempt to gain control over events and to express her frustration at not being able to do so. Her dialog with Dan about the "rules" of human interaction exposes the extent of her hostility and alienation from society. She then underscores her alienation by berating her son for being honest. In doing so, she spits in the face of convention, middle-class morality, and mainstream values. Yet her need to do so--as well as the irony and anger with which she expresses herself on the issue--reveal how profoundly powerless she feels in society.

Lying for Personal Gain and Ego Enhancement

"These Friends of Mine" offers the opportunity to examine two additional types of deception in sitcoms: lies for personal gain and lies for ego enhancement. Introduced in early 1994, "These Friends" falls into Haugh's "eccentric family" (Haugh, 1981) subgenre of domestic comedies. Even more than "Roseanne," it makes use of what Chesebro labels "ironic communication" (Chesebro, 1986)--a sitcom strategy characterized by an ignorant and socially powerless main character who expresses "the rhetoric of the loser" for the audience (p. 497). In this case, the lead character, Ellen, who is a comedienne in real life, plays the role of "fool" to the hilt. The show's three supporting characters include Ellen's roommate, Adam, and two single female friends. All appear to be in their late 20s or early 30s, live in apartments in an urban setting, and are childless and unmarried.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of "These Friends of Mine" is the sheer quantity of lies its characters tell. In the episodes examined for this study, characters layered lies one upon another in a dizzying array. Unlike "Home Improvement" and "Coach," where lies function mainly to reassert male dominance or to renegotiate the balance of power, lies in "These Friends" signify hopelessness and defeat. Ellen lies indiscriminately and suffers disastrous consequences. At the same time, her lies remain largely free of moral implications. As a result, the program's overall message is nihilistic: that the universe exists without purpose, that morality no longer has meaning, and that "truth" is a shifting, amorphous entity. So why worry? Regardless of the predicaments that her lies get her into, Ellen maintains a silly, knowing smile, signaling that it's all a joke--the lies, their repercussions, and most of all--herself. Engaged in self-parody and self-deprecation, she floats through the plot on a sea of deceit and cover-ups and ends up none the worse for wear --nor any the wiser.

In a typical episode,[8] Ellen attends a high school reunion, where she launches an elaborate series of deceptions intended to create a new persona for herself. She tells her old classmates that she's a cardiologist, that she's married and has several children, and other lies designed to hide the fact that her life has been a failure. But conflict arises when she meets an old boyfriend at the reunion and finds herself strongly attracted to him. They return to her apartment, where she faces the formidable challenge of keeping the lies straight that she told at the reunion, expanding on them when he asks questions (e.g. about her husband, work, and children), while at the same time communicating that she's available and interested in him. Eventually, this becomes a Sisyphusian task--and, although her expression remains fixed in its trademark goofy grin--she breaks down and tells him the truth about her situation (that she works in a bookstore, is single, has no children, etc.). He's not sure whether to believe her, but finally decides to try, and they end up kissing on the couch.

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[8] Broadcast on April 13, 1994.

Just when things are beginning to heat up, Ellen's roommate, Adam, bursts in with his own agenda of lies. He's been trying to manipulate a rent-control official into letting him have a coveted apartment by convincing him that he's a brain surgeon, that he's married to a cardiologist, and that they are wealthy and respectable (Adam is actually unemployed). With the rent-control official in tow, Adam grabs Ellen and introduces her as his wife, "the cardiologist." She protests to her new boyfriend that Adam is lying, but he has had enough: He stomps out in disgust, muttering that she can't be trusted. The rent-control official--equally repulsed by the situation--also exits, leaving Adam unrepentant and Ellen grinning like a madwoman. Ultimately, although the *consequence* of their lies proves disastrous all around, because of the characters' carefree attitude, the *feeling* projected is that none of it really matters, that it's all part of a demoralizing game.

Although the type of lies that Ellen and Adam engaged in (ego enhancement and personal gain) differ from those of the more domestically oriented sitcoms, personal-gain and ego-protecting lies may also be seen as attempts to negotiate power. In Ellen's case, in particular, lies denote vulnerability and powerlessness. The more she lies to reassert power and self-esteem, the more her lies have the opposite effect. A major function of the humor triggered by the lies in "These Friends of Mine" is to moderate and deflect the harshness of the show's underlying message of human impotence.

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from the symbolic reality that popular situation comedies construct around lies? As Cantor points out, "Whether consciously determined or not, television stories constitute a symbolic system with both economic and ideological functions" (p. 206). In this section, I argue that the *pervasiveness* of lies, their portrayal as largely *consequence-free*, and the *casual* tone with which they are treated in popular situation comedies suggests that lies perform two distinct ideological functions in television sitcoms:

First, lies in these programs serve as indicators of power negotiations or as metaphors for powerlessness. Deceit, in this sense, may be seen as a subtle attempt to resolve oppositional ideologies arising from the unequal distribution of power. By creating a world in which lies, deceptive acts, and manipulation are commonplace, situation comedies allow viewers to identify with and symbolically work through and accept their own powerlessness. In terms of gender-related negotiations over power, it is interesting to note that female characters engaged in dishonesty more often than males in this study. This supports Freeman's conclusion that "the most common characteristic of the women shown in [situation comedies], is their ability to *manipulate*" (Freeman, p. 218). As low-status members of society, females have historically resorted to deception to deal with male domination and other barriers to autonomy.

Second, and perhaps even more important, the pervasiveness and casual attitude toward lies expressed in sitcoms may be seen as indoctrinating viewers into an ethic of *commodity consumption*. The television comedies in this analysis incorporated lying and deceptive acts into their narratives with remarkable ease and unselfconsciousness. Sitcom lies were commonly used as fodder for jokes, as verbal slap-stick or simply as an element of witty repartee. Of course, it might be argued that comedy has always exploited lies and other forms of deception--and that, in fact, all jokes are to some extent "lies." Yet, the fact that lies frequently propel humor in sitcoms underscores the notion of lies as "signs" in television texts of hidden, embedded meanings. As Saenz writes, television transforms "events and meanings...into signs--signs for moral speculation, signs of motivation, signs of how to represent" (p. 43).

As signs, lies--represented in sitcoms as non-threatening, pervasive, inconsequential, and amusing--may be seen as instructing, inviting, and inculcating viewers into ideologically appropriate attitudes and beliefs toward deception. These attitudes and beliefs, in turn, serve specific commodity-culture goals. For example, viewers who accept the premise of lies as trivial, consequence-free, and light-hearted, make ideal targets for advertisers--who trade in illusion, exaggeration, and manipulation, if not clear-cut lies. In this way, situation comedies, as all popular culture forms in capitalist systems, work to reconfigure all human experience into "commodity experience" (Barns, 1989, p. 24).

The schooling of television viewers into the commodity ethic is intensified and reinforced through what Raymond Williams (1975) describes as "flow"--the blurring of seemingly discrete television segments into a unified whole. According to this concept, no clear line exists between entertainment programs such as sitcoms and the advertisements that surround them. On an experiential level, all television content--including news, situation comedies, and commercials--merges into a single, uninterrupted "viewing strip" (Newcomb, et. al., 1987, p. 66). Several media scholars have argued that the porousness of the membrane separating entertainment and advertising serves a critical ideological purpose. Williams maintains that it "establishes a sense of the world" and conveys the "meanings and values of a specific culture" (Williams, pp. 116, 118). Flow also constructs meaning, as Caputi points out, "through the juxtaposition of significant elements" (Caputi, 1991, pp. 33-34). Because television commercials and programming emerge from the same dominant culture mold, they "are linked ineluctably by this shared worldview and will naturally complement and reinforce one another" (pp. 33-34).

If we consider situation comedies and their commercials as a single, seamless message system with indistinguishable underlying meanings, symbols, and intent, it becomes clear how the casual treatment of lying in sitcoms promotes consumer ideology. The lighthearted attitude and post-modern sensibility toward deception promoted in sitcoms is highly advantageous from an advertiser's perspective. As Christopher Lasch noted in his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, "The consumer lives surrounded not so much by things as by fantasies" (Lasch, 1980, p. 30). Television viewers know that using Zest soap won't really energize them or alter their personalities; in the same way, they know that buying a sporty new Mustang won't transform their social lives. Yet they tolerate--and even play along with--these fantasies or "lies." In this sense, deceit can be seen as the very fabric from which consumer society is constructed.

As such, it should come as no surprise to find that entertainment fare repeatedly presents--and then downplays--deception. In discussing what he terms the "pathology of commodity culture" (p. 27), Barns argues that, "Despite the lure and promise of a commodity culture, reinforced by advertising images, the experience of the reality of such a culture produces deep-seated tensions and contradictions." Sitcoms may play an important part in articulating and partially resolving these conflicts. The portrayal of lies in sitcoms as a means of obtaining self esteem, material possessions, or power contradicts society's strong moral and ethical taboos against lying. But by repeatedly presenting characters who lie without serious consequences, situation comedies invite viewers to participate in a ritualistic *dismissal* of lying as a serious violation of ethical or moral standards.

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